



Radio in Proportion

The Hansen Family and strategies of relevance in the Danish Broadcasting Corporation 1925-50

Svømmekjær, Heidi Frank

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The Hansen Family and strategies of relevance in
the Danish Broadcasting Corporation 1925-50

Heidi Svømmekjær
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Abstract in English

In many ways Danish radio history has yet to be written. Although several books have been published by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DBC) and a four-volume edition of Danish media history exists, many central issues remain unexplored. Therefore this thesis focuses on the early public service in the popular spectrum of Danish broadcasting and one case in particular: the popular radio comedy series *The Hansen Family* (1929-49). This early mass phenomenon is approached as an arena for cultural discussions, national self-representation and early conceptions of the radio medium. Furthermore, it was selected as a representative of the “light” repertoire of the DBC in order to show *that* and *how* the corporation revealed paternalistic as well as entertaining tendencies - not only across the radio schedule but also within the single programme (in this case *The Hansen Family*).

The three main chapters in the thesis are dedicated to the historical/institutional *context* (chap. 4), different analytical approaches to the series as a whole and a cultural *phenomenon* (chap. 5), and a close reading of the *content* of selected episodes (chap. 6). Methodologically, this investigation is positioned between cultural history and media aesthetics with an hermeneutical approach to the content analysis in chapter 6. The primary research material consists of the complete *The Hansen Family*-episodes from the years 1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49 (approx. 200) as well as press clippings and the 2.5 recordings that remain of the 914 episodes originally broadcast on the DBC.

The central claim is that the DBC managed its public service responsibility by employing, among other things, what I call a “strategy of relevance”. The attempt at making the DBC seem relevant to its listeners is expressed as a “re-proportioning” in *The Hansen Family*. This is my term for the narrative process by which larger, more abstract societal events are reduced to a domestic scale, thus rendering them more “relatable” to the audience. As a whole, the thesis provides new insights into early Danish radio history as well as a terminology for comprehending some of the narrative mechanisms within the programmes, whilst exploring the role of entertainment programming in a public service context.

Resumé på dansk

Dansk radiohistorie er på mange måder et uskrevet kapitel. Selvom der findes flere udgivelser fra Statsradiofonien selv og en dansk mediehistorie i fire bind, henligger mange centrale problemstillinger endnu i historiens mørke. Det vil nærværende afhandling søge at råde bod på med et fokus på tidlig "public service", set fra det populære spektrum og med komedieserien *Familien Hansen* (1929-49) som central case. Afhandlingen undersøger dette tidlige massefænomen som en skueplads for kulturkampe, national selviscenesættelse og forestillinger om det nye radiomedium. Ydermere er *Familien Hansen* valgt som repræsentant for Statsradiofoniens underholdningsrepertoire for at belyse *at* og *hvordan* institutionen rummede både formynderiske og underholdende tendenser. Ikke blot på hele programfladen, men også i den enkelte udsendelse (i dette tilfælde *Familien Hansen*).

Afhandlingens kerne består af tre kapitler tilegnet hhv. den historiske/institutionelle *kontekst* (kap. 4), analytiske tilgange til serien som helhed og kulturelt *fænomen* (kap. 5) og nærlæsninger af *indholdet* i de enkelte afsnit (kap. 6). Metodisk placerer undersøgelsen sig mellem kulturhistorie og medieæstetik med en hermeneutisk tilgang til især næranalyserne i kapitel 6. Det primære analysemateriale består af samtlige manuskripter fra 1929, 34, 39, 44 og 49 svarende til ca. 200 afsnit. Derudover inddrages samtidige presseklip og de 2,5 eneste overleverede originaloptagelser af *Familien Hansen* af i alt 914 afsnit.

Den centrale påstand er, at Statsradiofonien i 1925-50 forvaltede sine public service-forpligtelser blandt andet ved at følge det, jeg kalder en "relevansstrategi". Denne bestræbelse på at gøre sig relevant for lytterne kommer til udtryk i en "re-proportionering" i *Familien Hansen*. Det er min betegnelse for den narrative proces, der omformer større og mere abstrakte samfundsmæssige fænomener til en hjemlig og mere "forståelig" skala. Samlet bidrager afhandlingen med nye indsigter omkring den tidlige danske radiohistorie, et begrebsapparat til at forstå nogle af de narrative mekanismer i programmerne, samt belyser underholdningsspektrets rolle i en public service institution.

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Big hugs are lined up for my lovely and endlessly supportive family in Denmark, Sweden, and Australia, who all kept me going with just the right amount of calls and consideration, and particularly my aunt, Carol Aeschliman for putting up with my irregular flow of texts for proofreading from one hemisphere to the other. Finally, to Troels Tarp... for help far surpassing what I can sum up in words: this thesis only *is*, because you *are*.



Ministeriet for Forskning, Innovation
og Videregående Uddannelser

1. Introduction

A woman approaches the concierge at the Danish broadcasting house with a serious complaint. She claims that her neighbour is eavesdropping on her private conversations in order to provide material for Jens Locher, the scriptwriter of the popular radio series *The Hansen Family*. The year is 1940 and evidently the idea of having her intimate details aired on national radio is very daunting to the woman, as it was to many of her fellow listeners during the early years of broadcasting. Interestingly, while the anecdote is only given a brief mention in the 15th anniversary publication of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DBC)¹, it refers to an immensely popular radio comedy series. *The Hansen Family* (THF) was broadcast weekly on the DBC in the years 1929-49 and attracted more than 65% of the Danish listeners at the peak of its popularity.² Revolving around the everyday challenges of an “average” Danish family it sought to reflect current issues and societal developments during one of the most tumultuous periods of the 20th century. However, as the anecdote shows, it also offered a platform for the public airing of private matters, what Jason Loviglio (2005)³ has referred to as radio’s “authorized transgressions” of the private sphere.

The first decades of broadcasting abound with these accounts of the seemingly incongruous pairing of public and private spheres, but it is THF on which I intent to focus in this thesis for the following reasons: aesthetically speaking THF was mainstream, but the phenomenon as a whole is exceptional in Danish media history, and to some extent even on an international level. Not only did a format usually associated with commercial broadcasting (the serial) appear in a strictly public service broadcasting institution (the DBC)⁴, but it also did so long before many of its sister-

¹ Breidahl, Axel and Rée, Knud: *Danmarks Radio, Den Danske Statsradiofoni gennem 15 Aar (Vol. 1)*, Chr.

² Listener statistics according to the back cover of: Locher, Jens: *Familien Hansen*, Forlaget Westermann, Copenhagen, 1944.

³ Loviglio, Jason: *Radio's Intimate Public, Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005. P. xvi.

⁴ Actually the English expression “public service” is an anachronism in this context, since there was no direct mention of it in Denmark at that point. According to Pia Jarvad’s Danish dictionary *Nye Ord*, the English wording did not enter the Danish language until 1984. However, the Danish equivalents, which I

organisations in Northern Europe followed suit.⁵ For these and several other reasons, THF is a valuable, albeit unusual, case for the exploration of entertainment programming in a public service context.

Background

At this point it might be useful to pause and ponder why this exception came into being at such an early point in time. One possible explanation might be related to the first listener survey conducted by the DBC in April 1929, incidentally the same month and year when THF premiered on the air as single sketches.⁶ This has earned a spot in media history as “the balalaika survey” because of the surprising revelation that the audience wanted more unusual instruments in their radio concerts. Of the 250,000 license holders registered at the time, 62% responded and some six months later the replies had already been analysed.⁷ The results revealed that the listeners were less interested in the existing high-cultural (music) profile of the DBC and more inclined towards dance music and light comedies. This case has been cited as an example of the paternalistic politics of the DBC, revealing how they blatantly ignored the results of the survey and continued in the same vein.⁸ However, the radio schedules from the following years

will be presenting in chapter 4.3., capture the spirit of the term first introduced by the BBC’s Director-General John Reith, and since Danish broadcasting is known to have been modeled on the BBC in many respects, I have decided to use “public service” in the current thesis.

⁵ Sweden’s first family series *Ingenjör Björck med familj* began in 1937, Norway experimented with the format shortly before the German occupation brought a confiscation of all radio apparatuses in 1941, Finland’s *Familjen Suominen* started in 1938, and Germany joined in with *Familie Tulpe* (DDR) and *Die Hesselbachs* (BRD) in 1949. Source: Björck, Amelie: *Höra hemma. Familj och social förändring i svensk radioserieteater från 1930-talet till 1990-talet*, Makadam Förlag, Gothenburg and Stockholm, 2010. Pp. 36-39. Regarding the UK, it has come to my attention very late in the process of revising this thesis that a British sketch show called *The Buggins Family* premiered on the BBC in 1925 and continued as a feature in various programmes such as *Children’s Hour*, and *The Kitchen Front* during WWII until 1948, with a few appearances on *Woman’s Hour* in the early 1950s. Even though I have not yet listened to one of the few surviving recordings held at the British Library, it is clear from the programme descriptions at the BBC (courtesy of John Escolme, BBC History Manager, to whom I am grateful for his thorough research) that it was similar to THF. It had a sketch format (which THF started out as), employed the family “setup”, and the series was used for public information on prudent housekeeping during the war. Yet, the fact that most of the characters were played by the same person, the author Mabel Constanduros and that it was a feature rather than an individual series places it in a much more variety-inspired category than THF.

⁶ THF premiered on 2 April and the questionnaire for the survey was printed on the reverse side of the licence fee cards collected between 1-15. April 1929. Skovmand, Roar (ed.): *DR 50*, Danmarks Radio, Denmark, 1975. (Henceforth referred to as DR50). P. 325.

⁷ Ibid. p. 329.

⁸ Jensen, Klaus B., et al.: *Dansk mediehistorie, Bind 2, 1880-1920, 1920-1960*, Samleren, Copenhagen, 1996. (Henceforth referred to as DMH). P. 209.

indicate a willingness towards also offering light music and entertainment. The same point is made in the 50th anniversary publication from the DBC, which recounts the skepticism of the members of Radiorådet (The Radio Council) concerning the outcome of the survey and yet registers a slight change in favour of lighter programming following the survey.⁹ Since the listeners had explicitly asked for more light drama and short sketches, turning THF into a regular feature as a series appears to be a simple way for the DBC to have accommodated their audience without making any drastic changes. Hence, in August (only a few months before the results were made public) THF began to be aired weekly.

Whether or not this was the actual reasoning behind the launch of THF as a series, I see it as part of a general attention to the audience's tastes, even when they did not correspond with those of The Radio Council, and with Director-General Emil Holm in particular. His stance on the survey was that it was altogether unnecessary since, as far as he was concerned, their wishes had already been taken into consideration in the programmes.¹⁰ Soon after Holm's successor F. E. Jensen started in 1937, Jensen drafted a proposal for a new survey, which was ignored by the Radio Council and hence was never launched.¹¹ Yet, it shows the difference in the two Directors' approaches to the audience and their views of the DBC's obligations. Therefore I propose to read THF as a phenomenon that bridged the gap between these two positions: not only as a programme that existed under both Directors, but also as a phenomenon which walked the narrow line between entertainment and public service.

Research question and claims

This leads me to the general research question: how did the DBC manage its public service responsibilities in the so-called "monopoly years" of Danish Broadcasting (in this case 1925-50)? As radio history is still a relatively young discipline in Denmark, many of its central issues have yet to be addressed, including the changing interpretations of public service in the history of the DBC. The only research broaching

⁹ Op.cit. DR50, p. 332.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 331.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 333.

these questions in relation to the early years is Ib Poulsen's (2006)¹² investigation of the development of the Danish radio feature. However, since this format is generally considered as belonging to the more enlightening or "serious" spectrum of broadcasting, looking into a popular programme such as THF would constitute an important contribution to the field.

Furthermore, few have explored how the Danish public service obligations have been interpreted in practice. Lofty objectives aside, what do the actual programmes tell us about the aims of broadcasting? In other words, which messages can be contained within the single lines of a radio comedy and what kind of purposes could a series such as THF serve? Hence, this thesis is *not* an exploration of the concept of public service on a policy level. It is a close examination of a popular, even "commercial" programme that may seem a contradiction in a public service context but which nevertheless delivered content in accordance with the expectations to a national broadcasting institution such as the DBC. Although the history of THF is fraught with assumptions about the opposition between elitist and popular programming (which the discussions in this thesis will also reflect), I also aim to show it as a more dynamic relation with THF as my main example. As a result, I have arrived at the following claims:

- ♦ The DBC managed their public service responsibilities 1925-50 by employing, among other things, what I call a "strategy of relevance". This describes their ongoing quest to accommodate the listeners by meeting them with familiar reflections.
- ♦ One way of making the DBC seem relevant to the license fee-paying public was the narrative process of "re-proportioning". Inspired by John Ellis' (1999 & 2000) term "working through"¹³ and based on my study of THF, re-proportioning is a concept I developed to describe the process by which larger societal events are rescaled to domestic proportions in the series. By doing so,

¹² Poulsen, Ib: *Radiomontagen og dens rødder, et studie i den danske radiomontage med vægt på dens radiofoniske genreforudsætninger*. Forlaget Samfundslitteratur, Frederiksberg, 2006.

¹³ Ellis, John: "Television as Working-Through" in: Gripsrud, Jostein (ed.): *Television and Common Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1999. Pp. 55-70. AND Ellis, John: *Seeing Things, Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2000.

otherwise abstract or distant events are rendered relatable to the “average” Danish listener.

Although I do not claim that the strategy of relevance is entirely conscious, it does seem to emanate from much of the material broadcast by the DBC in my research period. The strategy refers to the way in which DBC seems to have been attuned to the audience’s perceived needs and in that sense, my larger point is related to what Paddy Scannell (1996)¹⁴ refers to as the “care-structures”¹⁵ of broadcasting. With reference to Martin Heidegger, Scannell speaks of the care structures, broadcasting’s ongoing orientation towards the audience’s experience of time and their expected needs. This is most clearly expressed in his concept of “dailiness” - “*the* unifying structure of all its [broadcasting’s] activities”.¹⁶ Scannell undertakes several case studies in trying to show how these general care structures of broadcasting manifest themselves in the single programmes. I also examine a way in which a kind of care, motivated by the eagerness to seem relevant, is expressed in the THF-narrative. However, as mentioned above, my process has not been the same as Scannell’s, since I wanted to begin with the single programme and move outwards from there. Thus in order to approach THF on its own terms, it was necessary to develop a terminology determined by its own linguistic, narrative, and production-related specificities. Only then did I realise the potentially general applicability of my findings, i.e. that the re-proportioning process can also be identified in series and genres other than THF. Therefore I see my endeavour, which takes the *programme* as its point of departure, as a complementary study to Scannell, whose quest concerns the nature of broadcasting as a whole.

Academic field

As for my approach to radio studies and the above claims, it is eclectic in a way that reflects my academic background as well as the composite nature of the THF material.

¹⁴ Scannell, Paddy: *Radio, Television, and Modern Life: a Phenomenological Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 145.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 149.

The three main theoretical strands informing my approach are media aesthetics, cultural history, and literary hermeneutics.

The media aesthetic approach is influenced by the likes of Rudolf Arnheim (1971)¹⁷, Finn Quist (1962)¹⁸, and Andrew Crisell (1994)¹⁹, who, among others, narrowed in on the specific aesthetic characteristics of radio. This aspect is central to my attempt to combine the written and recorded THF-material into a more three-dimensional impression of the original media product.

The cultural history approach is inspired by the many fascinating studies of (particular kinds of) radio as entangled in specific cultural, social, and historical realities, such as those undertaken by Kristin Skoog (2010)²⁰, Amelie Björck (2010)²¹, Alexander Badenoch (2008)²², and Michele Hilmes (1997)²³. This approach opens up the narrow focus of the aesthetic approach to include the larger contexts influencing, and possibly influenced by, the content of radio.

Finally, literary hermeneutics such as the intuitive kind employed by Eric Auerbach (1958)²⁴ has indirectly shaped my content analysis of THF, which has moved in circular motions from single words in the manuscripts to the whole series and back to the textual level. In a sense, Auerbach's concept of the "Ansatz"²⁵ is the unspoken ideal for my overall approach. Roughly speaking, an Ansatz is a remarkable trait or detail identified within the text itself, which prompts an analysis of its own. It informs the way I have approached THF, so to speak from the inside and out, motivated by particular observations in the THF manuscripts.

¹⁷ Arnheim, Rudolf: *Radio*, translated by Ludwig, Margaret and Read, Herbert. Reprinted from Faber & Faber Ltd. by Arno Press and the New York Times, New York, 1971.

¹⁸ Quist, Finn: "Radioteatret - det blinde teater" in: Ludvigsen, Christian and Kehler, Stephan (eds.): *Teatrets Historie*, Politikens Forlag, Copenhagen, 1962. Pp. 377-384.

¹⁹ Crisell, Andrew: *Understanding Radio*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994.

²⁰ Skoog, Kristin: *The "Responsible" Woman: The BBC and Women's Radio 1945 -1955*. Unpublished Ph.D.-thesis, University of Westminster, 2010.

²¹ Op.cit. Björck (2010).

²² Badenoch, Alexander: *Voices in Ruins. West German Radio Across the 1945 Divide*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and New York, 2008. Esp. chapter 4.

²³ Hilmes, Michele: *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-52*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis & London, 1997.

²⁴ Auerbach, Erich: *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, Francke Verlag Bern, 1958.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

In a broader sense I have also sought methodological and historical inspiration in the much fuller descriptions of the history of the BBC in order to compare and contrast with the Danish reality.

Structure

The reason for choosing a single case as I have done, is that it allows for a multifaceted approach that explores the many historical dimensions and cultural entanglements of the single programme, thereby revealing the complexities in even the most seemingly innocuous entertainment. Hence the central analysis of THF is three-pronged - taking the context, the phenomenon, and the content of single THF-episodes into consideration, all of which are reflected in the structure of the thesis. However, before arriving at the analysis, I will present two background chapters. The first chapter, chapter 2, presents a selective literature review of three subjects, providing the theoretical backdrop for my analytical methodology (close reading), the chosen genre (the radio serial), and the implications of my case (THF's inherent national imagery). Chapter 3 contains a more thorough introduction to the THF material with details regarding my archival research and considerations about my practical methodology.

Having created the theoretical and methodological foundation, I will move on to the analysis, extending over chapters 4, 5, and 6. Chapter 4 provides the historical *context* to THF with information about Danish history 1925-50; a history of the DBC told through eight cases from the programme archives; early public service discussions; a biography of Jens Locher (the author of THF for its entire run) and finally a brief introduction of similar family serials and soaps from the international scene. Chapter 5 narrows the scope from the context to the THF *phenomenon* with sub-chapters on radio drama production; a comparative analysis of the manuscripts and the few surviving recordings of THF; an analysis of every fifth year of THF showing the larger developments in the series; a reception analysis based on press clippings and finally a review of the many scattered references to THF in the radio historical literature.

Thus having established both the context of THF and the THF series as a phenomenon, chapter 6 moves on to exploring its actual *content*. While I discussed Scannell in

connection to my *general* pursuit above and will only return to him sporadically throughout, I will be introducing John Ellis' concept of "working through" in relation to my *analytical* pursuit in chapter 6. His thoughts have been a source of inspiration during the development of my own concept "re-proportioning", which I will also present along with its seven sub-categories. These categories each represent a particular narrative strategy for transforming real life events in the THF universe. These have different ways of entering the storylines as well as changing levels of topicality. The first category called "direct re-proportioning" is a kind of miniature model for the larger concept of "re-proportioning", which refers to the direct transfer of a societal issue to the domestic sphere, such as when the larger "family" of the Danish nation is asked to follow certain austerity measures for the benefit of society and the individual THF family takes on the challenge. The second category is "commissions", which is named after the commissions the author of THF claimed to have been given by different governing bodies to cover certain topics on his show. This is one way of securing a high level of topicality by including specific events such as elections and social initiatives scheduled for a date in the immediate future. The third category is "holidays and seasons", which refers to episodes dedicated to typical recurring traditions throughout the year. This was an opportunity to discuss notions of Danishness in conjunction with holiday rituals performed around the time of the broadcast. The fourth category is "trends", which refers to THF's often humorous coverage of then current trends such as health schemes and the use of new household appliances. The fifth category is "movements", the underlying atmosphere or larger developments of a period, which cause the trends before. Finally, the seventh category "nudges" refers to the possible political or war-related subtext in the episodes, which was expressed in internal references to authorities, especially to the German occupational forces during WWII.

All of these categories are based on general observations across the 20 years of THF, and their presence in the episodes fluctuates with the preoccupations of the times. Together they show various ways of making societal change relatable and methods for reflecting the collective, everyday experience of living in the second quarter of the 20th century. Finally, in order to explore this in depth I will perform seven analyses corresponding with the re-proportioning categories, focusing on selected THF-storylines and drawing parallels to the larger body of episodes. Chapter 7 will discuss

the main points and conclusions throughout and ponder the choices made and ideas rejected along the way. Roughly speaking then, it is possible to trace the abovementioned description of my academic field through the structure of the thesis. Hence, the cultural history approach is *mainly*, but not exclusively, represented in the theoretical chapters on radio serials and national imagery (2.2. and 2.3.) as well as the “context” chapter (4). The media aesthetic approach has influenced the chapter on radio aesthetics (2.1.) and the “phenomenon” chapter (5), while the hermeneutic approach is seen in the “content” chapter (6).

With this structure I hope to show the richness of the THF material and the extent to which the series, and indeed most other programmes are always embedded in the historical and cultural developments of their time. As the opening anecdote wants us to believe, THF was an immensely popular show, one which aimed at a certain degree of verisimilitude, trying to create what to the woman was a rather too recognisable reflection of her everyday life. What it also reveals is the somewhat derogatory treatment the series has been given in contemporary and later radio historical literature due to the very qualities that made it exceptional i.e. its long run, large audience, and “light” content. This historical omission is mirrored by staggering archival “neglect”, which means that today there are only 2.5 recordings available of the 914 episodes aired. By bringing all of these omissions to light and using what does thankfully remain in the way of manuscripts, recordings, press clippings and so on, this thesis seeks to remedy what is unfortunately a very common occurrence in media historical research. As Hilmes (1997)²⁶ points out:

So much of what was actually broadcast – the sounds and stories actually experienced by listeners – went out live, unrecorded, and with little record keeping. Many – the vast majority – of broadcast hours are lost forever; others must be pieced together out of scripts, press accounts, and reminiscences.

That is what I intend to do in the following chapters.

²⁶ Op.cit. Hilmes (1997), p. xvi.

2. Selections From Radio Theory

Part of the process of “piecing together” the lost sounds of radio is also identifying the academic issues raised by these programmes. Therefore, I will present three radio theoretical discussions central to THF as a case. Chapter 2.1. (*Radio Aesthetics and Analysis*) provides the background for my “close reading”²⁷ approach by tracing early texts on radio aesthetics and more current studies, which include the *content* of radio programmes. What these studies have in common is the way they approach radio, or a particular format such as radio drama, in *relative* isolation from contextual concerns. Chapter 2.2. (*Radio Serials*) covers the main issues that have concerned scholars in the (radio) serial format and which also intertwine in THF. Thereby I wish to point out what makes this case worthy of both the close reading mentioned above and a more contextual reading including aspects of reception, production, historical context etc. Finally, in recognition of THF’s self-proclaimed status as a national image, chapter 2.3. (*National Images on the Air*) outlines different strategies for portraying the nation on the radio and on film. Even if this aspect is not central to my analysis of how current events were transformed in THF, it is an important key to understanding some of the mechanisms, which form a part of what I call the process of “re-proportioning”. As mentioned in chapter 1, this term will be introduced in chapter 6.1. but first I will return to the formative years of radio aesthetics.

²⁷ In the current thesis, “close reading” has a double meaning. On the one hand it refers to my case study of *The Hansen Family* (THF) as a series, spanning over twenty years and 914 episodes. On the other hand it refers to the classical idea of reading and re-reading a single text/episode, focusing on its form and content in detail. This division is reflected in chapter 5, which deals with THF on a general level, and chapter 6, which presents content analyses of individual episodes. However, I still consider it crucial to approach the material from several angles, something which will be reflected in chapters 4 and 5 in particular.

2.1. Radio Aesthetics and Analysis

2.1.1. Introduction

A project such as the present one, where close reading of single programmes is prioritised alongside production- and institution aspects, is also related to discussions of radio aesthetics. Performing a close reading of a particular radio production or series requires knowledge of the mechanisms of the radio medium and the specific conditions under which it operates. In the following chapter I will present some of the historical phases, schools and approaches, which have informed my close reading approach to radio (focusing on a single programme for a content and context analysis). The outline will cover fundamental discussions of the *nature* and *purpose* of the medium in the 1930s in Germany, as well as debates about a particular radio format in Denmark in the 1940s, and attempts at summarising, categorising, and analysing productions in Danish, German, and English texts from the 1990s and 2000s. The aim is to reach an understanding of the close reading approach and its contribution to the study of the radio medium in general. The texts I have chosen to include cover a variety of positions and backgrounds, from the German cultural critics of the 1930s, past the Danish group consisting mainly of radio professionals in the 1930s and 40s, and finally to the more current radio scholars from Europe and America. Together they represent the invisible framework of my analysis, which has shaped my approach and formed the basis of my early analytical process. However, I have not chosen to apply any of these theories to the THF material, but instead developed my own conceptual framework for the analysis, which reaches much more to the core of what I want to show in THF.

2.1.2. The nature and purpose of radio

What I have chosen to call the *nature* of radio refers to the specific aesthetics of the medium, including its content, form, reception, and modes of address. The *purpose* of radio on the other hand, refers to the objectives behind the aesthetic choices in the single production or the editorial choices between several productions. This distinction informs my own double take on THF as a cultural phenomenon and a vehicle for public

“education”²⁸ and will therefore reappear in different versions throughout this thesis as well as the current chapter.

Considering that radio is a mono-sensory medium, the single radio programme is an extremely composite media product. The fact that it merely addresses one sense (literally speaking) necessitates a complex aesthetic translation which one might describe as “synaesthetic” inspired by a definition of “synaesthesia” by Ramachandran and Hubbard (2001):

Synaesthesia is a curious condition in which an otherwise normal person experiences sensations in one modality when a second modality is stimulated. For example, a synaesthete may experience a specific colour whenever she encounters a particular tone (e.g., C-sharp may be blue) or may see any given number as always tinged a certain colour (e.g., ‘5’ may be green and ‘6’ may be red).²⁹

Granted, this is a psychological definition of a pathological condition, but if transferred to the act of radio listening, it acquires a metaphorical meaning referring to the way in which radio content is always experienced in one sensual modality (hearing) and results in experiences in the other modalities (tasting, feeling, smelling, and seeing).³⁰ This observation may seem rather self-evident, but it is important to keep in mind when encountering references to the “blindness” of radio in aesthetic discussions, since they foreground sight as the main absence in the medium. One of the earliest examples of this is from Rudolf Arnheim (1971, orig. 1936), who pointed out that “[...] wireless rules out a certain range of senses in a most startling way. It seems much more sensorily defective and incomplete than the other arts – because it excludes the most important

²⁸ With this term I do not mean to imply that THF had any explicitly educational value. What I refer to as its educational content, is THF as an education in (then) contemporary Danish living, expressed in the process of re-proportioning that I will discuss in chapter 6.

²⁹ Ramachandran, V. S. and Hubbard, E. M.: “Synaesthesia - A Window Into Perception, Thought and Language” in: *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 8, ed. 12, 2001. Pp. 3-34. Quotation from p. 4.

³⁰ This notion is mentioned by Shingler and Wieringa (1998): “For all those listeners familiar with oranges, the colour, texture, smell and taste can be vividly experienced on the radio by the judicious use of words, and particularly when those words are accompanied by the sounds of tearing peel and squirting juice. What so many have regarded as a sensorily deficient medium would therefore actually seem to be quite the reverse.” Shingler, Martin and Wieringa, Cindy: *On Air: Methods and Meanings of Radio*, Arnold, London, 1998. P. 76.

sense, that of sight.”³¹ This “exclusion” posed a challenge to the radio actor, who had to compensate for the aural absence of the silent person in a dialogue by using minimal interpolation: “In a broadcast dialogue, only the person who is speaking exists acoustically ...How radically the existence of a person is reduced to a partial utterance, and what a powerful effect can be achieved in this way...”.³² I will return to this point in connection to the comparative analysis of sound recordings vs. manuscripts in the case of THF and chapter 5.2.

Despite seemingly negative terms such as the “sensorily defective and incomplete” impression of radio, Arnheim saw its blindness as a great advantage. The absence of visual impressions offered the possibility of remaining true to his belief in “a creative economy in art” and in “enjoyment”³³. According to this, the ideal work of art or broadcast may only consist of the most essential and deliberate elements and in the case of radio, should not invite the visualising efforts of the listener.³⁴ Arnheim thus approached radio aesthetics from a *nature* point of view, clearly focusing on the formal aspects of the radio production, but he did not mention *why* the “creative economy in art” was necessary. It was first and foremost an artistic expression in its own right with no other debt towards society than maintaining artistic integrity. Walter Benjamin (1999, orig. 1932)³⁵ on the other hand, addressed radio aesthetics purely from a *purpose* point of view in his article on the collaboration between theatre and radio. Art without a purpose belonged to the bourgeois mindset, which also favoured a mere distribution of artistic content without any efforts at making it relevant to the audience. To Benjamin, the theatre/radio collaboration must necessarily result in a didactic production, which could interact with real life and would encourage critical thinking in its audience. He imagined productions that tackled everyday challenges with school and marriage in the shape of example and counter example. On this level he was in agreement with the aim of many family serials THF among them (see chapter 2.2.) and

³¹ Op.cit. Arnheim (1971), pp. 134-135. Decades later, Douglas argued that this “invisibility” as she called it “has been absolutely central to its effects on American culture.” Douglas, Susan J.: *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004. Quotation from p. 6.

³² Ibid. pp. 158-59.

³³ Ibid. p. 134.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 136.

³⁵ Benjamin, Walter: “Theatre and Radio. The Mutual Control of Their Educational Program”, translated by Rodney Livingstone, in: Jennings, Michael W., Eiland, Howard and Smith, Gary (eds.): *Selected Works*, vol. 2, part 2. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, USA, 2005. Pp. 583-586.

the more overtly didactic dialogues appearing in children's radio in the 1930s in Denmark and Sweden, just to mention a few examples. What Benjamin did not agree with however, was the use of radio as a distant tool for passive mass education:

Radio, which has a particular duty to take up older cultural products, will best do this by means of adaptations that not only do justice to modern technology, but also satisfy the expectations of an audience that is contemporary with this technology. Only in this way will the apparatus be freed from the nimbus of a "gigantic machine for mass education" (as Schoen described it) and reduced to a format that is worthy of human beings.³⁶

Instead, Benjamin stressed the importance of rescaling the cultural canon ("older cultural products") to human dimensions³⁷. More importantly, radio could contribute to the movement from "culture (the culture of knowledge)" to "training (training in critical judgement)", from passive cultural reception to active critical thinking, which Bertolt Brecht's "epic theatre" was already doing for the stage drama. Brecht (1932-33)³⁸ and Benjamin shared a vision of a more (inter-)active kind of radio in his utopian (and by now infamous) talk on radio as a means of communication. He declared that radio technology had entered the world prematurely, before producers and audiences were ready to produce and consume its content. In that sense the radio still possessed the potential to become a revolutionary tool for public education, provided that it manage to evolve from being a mere apparatus of distribution into an apparatus of communication. By taking this didactic and "bilateral" approach, Brecht hoped to distribute the power of the medium more evenly among radio producers and audiences, or rather, unevenly, but in the audiences' favour. Furthermore, he recognised the possibility of the medium to expose heads of state, laying their activities bare to public scrutiny. This skepticism towards authorities informed much of Brecht's approach to radio, which is difficult to argue against considering the secrecy and one-sided propaganda of the Hitler regime, which later confirmed his suspicions. But - it also blinded Brecht to the many positive intentions and possibilities behind broadcasting as well as made him (along with Benjamin) underestimate the relative power of the

³⁶ Ibid. p. 585.

³⁷ This notion of a "rescaling" of cultural content in a sense foreshadows my own concept of THF as a "re-proportioning" of current events and trends. I will return to this idea in a different incarnation in chapters 6.1. and 6.2.

³⁸ Brecht, Bertolt: "Radio As a Means of Communication. A talk on the function of radio.", translated by Stuart Hood in: *Screen*, vol. 20, ed. 3-4, Winter, 1979. Pp. 24-28.

listeners. Even in the early years they often exercised their right to publicly critique radio, demand changes, and, in the worst case, turn off the radio altogether. However, these developments were only at their beginning, when Brecht held his talk and in the following years, some of the critical listeners and producers started discussing the radio drama genre in Denmark.

Radio drama - a new genre in the making

From the mid 1930s to 1940s, there was an ongoing debate in Denmark about radio aesthetics in connection to the genre of radio drama. In many ways it was a continuation of Arnheim's *nature* approach, as the debaters did not connect their arguments much to the *purpose* of radio drama. Instead, they explored the radio medium and the way it conditioned radio drama in great detail. The discussion was spurred by one event in particular: in 1932-33 the DBC held a radio drama contest for which 1396 manuscripts were submitted.³⁹ In a radio programme⁴⁰ dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the first real radio drama manuscript at the DBC, the speaker remarks that although the contest seemed like a quantitative success, it marked a qualitative low point, since most of the material was useless (only 35 manuscripts were deemed usable). This situation sparked the first part of the radio drama discussion in the Danish journal for theatre, music and the arts called *Forum*, where a reader named Ejnar Kristensen (1934)⁴¹ proposed that the solution be found in the technical dimension of radio drama production. According to his article "Hørespillets Fornyelse" ("The Renewal of Radio Drama"), the microphone was to leave the studio and strive to capture the open air landscapes. Kristensen found inspiration in the "listening images" of the day, which were a series of radio features from 1931-43, where the reporter Aksel Dahlerup brought the microphone to a variety of people and places instead of the other way around. With the image of a particular recording of a nightingale in mind (which accidentally caught the sound of a train passing and thereby included the whole landscape) Kristensen advocated the simultaneous recording of sound and speech on

³⁹ Op.cit. DBC15. P. 166.

⁴⁰ *Hørespillet i Danmark gennem 30 år* (The Radio Drama in Denmark For 30 Years). 07.09.1958. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=871b157c-67e0-4e0f-83ec-97a981670c47>

⁴¹ Kristensen, Ejnar: "Hørespillets Fornyelse" in: *Forum*, ed. January, 1934. Pp. 4-6.

wax: "...the real artistic objective will not be reached until *several sounds sound at the same time and create a painting*."⁴² The same January issue of *Forum* featured a response from the House Director at the DBC, Oluf Bang⁴³, who dismissed Kristensen's suggestion with reference to the cacophony of earlier radio drama productions. To Bang "the word" was the pivotal concern and the primary creator of mental images in radio drama, while sound (effects) were mere accompaniments because they tended to reduce the word to a single interpretation.⁴⁴ Unlike Arnheim, Bang, along with the other Danish debaters, applauded radio drama's ability to remain open to the imagination of its listeners, and to invite their co-creating efforts through the use of words.

Half a year after the Kristensen/Bang articles, editor Sverkel Biering added to the debate with "Statsradiofonien og Hørespilproblemet" ("The State Radiophony and the Problem of Radio Drama"⁴⁵), also published in *Forum*. He continued the focus on the technical aspects of radio drama production as seen in Kristensen, though with an eye for the responsibility of the DBC. According to Biering, the crisis in the genre after the great radio drama contest showed an absence of radiophonic insight. Therefore he suggested that the DBC commission plays from selected playwrights and offer them an introduction to the intricacies of radio drama production, in order to avoid the kind of plays that had "nothing to do with radio and the nature of radio."⁴⁶ Biering thereby highlighted radio drama as a specific genre with media specific conditions, which must be taken into consideration. This is an important observation on Biering's part, because the early radio drama did suffer under the constant comparison to stage drama. For a long time, the comparison prevented radio drama from making the most of its strongest feature, which I agree was and still is its "blindness" and the ensuing freedom of movement in time and space, physically as well as psychologically.

⁴² Ibid. p. 5. Original version: "... det egentlig kunsteriske Maal naas først, naar *flere Lyde optræder samtidig og giver et Maleri*."

⁴³ Bang, Oluf: "Forfatteren Oluf Bang svarer" in: *Forum*, ed. January, 1934. Pp. 6-9.

⁴⁴ Op.cit. Bang, p. 8. Interestingly, this claim was reversed some 50 years later, when Andrew Crisell (orig. 1986) argued for the supremacy of the word and its ability to steer the interpretation in a certain direction: "It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that the primary code of radio is linguistic, since words are required to contextualize all the other codes." Crisell, Andrew: *Understanding Radio*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. P. 54.

⁴⁵ Biering, Sverkel: "Statsradiofonien og Hørespilproblemet" in: *Forum*, June, 1935. Pp. 14-15.

⁴⁶ Op.cit. Biering, p. 15. Original version: "[...] intet har med Radio og Radioens Væsen at gøre."

During the re-organisation following the transition between the first Director-General Emil Holm and the new Managing Director General F.E. Jensen in 1937, the DBC established the first Department for Drama and Literature and Hans Werner was appointed Head of the Department. On that occasion he presented his visions in *Hørespil kontra Skuespil* (Radio Drama vs. Stage Drama)⁴⁷. Aesthetically he agreed a lot with Bang, as they both favoured “the word” as the focal point of any drama, though Werner also made use of a reference to the “Listening Images” that Bang’s opponent Kristensen saw as a possible source of inspiration. In his comparison to stage drama, Werner further explained that some stage dramas, the French classicist kind in particular, were more easily adapted to radio because of their emphasis on dialogue. The THF series also belonged to this category of dialogue-driven and minimally sound-orchestrated radio dramas.⁴⁸ Interestingly, despite calling it “banal”, politician and chairman of the Radio Council Julius Bomholt described THF as a truly radiophonic series for that very reason:

“The ideal radio drama is the dialogue, the simplest form of conversation, a male and a female voice that complement each other. The classic example is “The Hansen Family”, which - banal as the content may be - is truly radiophonic with short lines [spoken] in uncomplicated situations of our time.”⁴⁹

This remark was made in passing in his article on the aesthetics of radio drama for the 15th anniversary publication by the DBC from 1940. In contrast to the other debaters, his text was less of a discussion piece and more of a detailed description of the genre, covering aspects of production, reception, structure, style, content etc. Seven years after the radio drama contest that started the debate, Bomholt still commented on the apparent inability to meet the audience’s demands in terms of the quantity and quality of radio drama. This apparent struggle with the genre makes it all the more unusual that THF had already found its formula in 1929, which apparently continued to be successful. In Bomholt’s article, he joined Bang and Werner in their regard for the word

⁴⁷ Werner, Hans: “Hørespil kontra Skuespil” in: *Forum*, Chr. Erichsens Forlag, ed. April, 1937. Pp. 3-4.

⁴⁸ The dialogue-driven productions would later be considered the last remnant from stage drama, when more sophisticated sound productions had become possible and the film had taken the place of stage drama as the aesthetic ideal for radio drama.

⁴⁹ Bomholt, Julius: “Hørespillet” in DBC15, I. Pp. 105-113. Quotation from p. 109. Original version: “Det ideelle Hørespil er Dialogen, den enkleste Form for Samtale, en Mands- og en Kvinderøst, der klæder hinanden. Det klassiske Eksempel er “Familien Hansen”, der - selv om Indholdet er nok så banalt - er ægte radiofonisk med korte Replikker i ukomplicerede Nutidssituationer.” For further discussions of how THF was received in its time as well as in radio history, see chapters 4.3., 5.4. and 5.5.

as the central element. He also highlighted the spartan expression of the genre, which relied on minimal effects and the co-creation of its listeners.⁵⁰ Again, this view is related to Arnheim, who connected this “spartan expression” to the blindness of the radio medium. However, Arnheim was strictly opposed to the reliance on the listener, considering it a sign of inferior craftsmanship if the radio production needed external help for its completion.

After three years as Head of Department for Drama and Literature, Werner published a booklet called *Hørespillet* (The Radio Drama).⁵¹ He further stressed the autonomy of the radio drama genre, its artistic value, and the authority of the director over the often opinionated audience: “Where the effect must be harsh, it must be so, and the listener, who does not like harsh effects in his living room, must be excused for a moment, it will all be over soon, and the artistic truth is the first and the most important [thing].”⁵² Furthermore, he was opposed to the extensive use of a narrator to communicate the epic content of radio drama instead of delivering it in the shape of sound images, or, woven into the dialogue as was often the case in the French classicist drama he had mentioned three years earlier.

A much more radical approach was taken in the 1941 article “Thalias Stedbarn” (Thalia’s Step Child)⁵³ by radio playwright and author H. C. Branner. In his opinion, radio drama had yet to establish itself as an independent genre, since, as indicated by the title of his article⁵⁴, it was still much too dependent on stage drama. Instead, he declared music the new ideal, thereby banning the notions of plot and character, and replacing them with liberated voices, variations over themes, and abstraction. Only by doing so, Branner claimed, would radio drama truly become an autonomous genre. Even with this radical stance, he still declared that “[...] the material of radio drama is the word and the word alone - the dense, penetrating, spoken word with its inherent

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 106.

⁵¹ Werner, Hans, *Hørespillet*, Nyt Nordisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1940.

⁵² Ibid. p. 17. Original version: “Hvor Virkningen skal være grell, maa den være det, og den Lytter, der ikke kan lide grelle Virkninger i sin Dagligstue, maa undskylde et Øjeblik, det er jo snart overstaaet, og den kunstneriske Sandhed er det første og det vigtigste.”

⁵³ Branner, H. C.: “Thalias Stedbarn” in: *Forum*, ed. January, 1941. Pp. 18-19.

⁵⁴ Thalia was the muse for comedy and poetry, but in this context represented stage drama in general.

ability of creating images”.⁵⁵ Only the word was to be utilised as a sound element released from mere semantics. This programmatic vision came to fruition in Branner’s own highly acclaimed and innovative radio drama *100 Kroner* (100 Crowns) from 1949, which I shall return to in chapter 4.2.1. While Branner had considerable success with his plays, another popular author and playwright known as Soya received many refusals from the DBC. With that experience in mind he gave a scathing talk in 1941 on the status of radio drama called *Hvorfor er Hørespillet saa daarligt?* (Why is radio drama so bad?)⁵⁶. He did not blame the poor quality on aesthetic details, but targeted the structural difficulties connected to broadcasting a play on national radio as well as the decision-making of individual employees at the DBC. Written at the beginning of the German occupation during WWII, he highlighted the self-censorship inherent in a public institution such as the DBC, which aimed at catering to everyone and therefore seeks consensus in all its dramatic production: “The radio drama is “so bad”, because the playwrights are not allowed to touch on any kind of substantial subject.”⁵⁷ By thus highlighting the institutional reality that all radio production was embedded in, he pointed to another aspect of the media-specific conditions of radio drama than what was seen in the abovementioned texts. This consensus-seeking environment may not have been entirely caused by the context of war, as it is an inevitable part of all public service broadcasting to in certain periods or programmes strive towards a more “careful” coverage. However, in times of peace it has usually been dealt with by voicing equal amounts of opposite opinions on a given subject within the same programme. As I will be showing in chapter 6, THF was one such programme since it dealt with its subjects in an ambiguous manner, which made even seemingly clear morales disintegrate on closer inspection.

In general there was a purist tendency among debaters such as Bang, Werner and Bomholt, who privileged the language, and especially, the dialogue of radio drama, while sound effects and heavy voice-over were generally regarded as distractions. This view was only possible because of their belief in the co-creation of the listeners, who

⁵⁵ Op.cit. Branner, p. 19. Original version: “[...] Hørespillets Form er Ordet og Ordet alene - det fortættede, indtrængende, talte Ord med den billedskabende Evne, det har i sig selv.”

⁵⁶ Soya: *Hvorfor er Hørespillet saa daarligt? Et foredrag holdt i Studentersamfundet 14. Febr. 1941*, Carit Andersens Forlag, Copenhagen, 1941.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

were to complement the spartan expression with an inner wealth of images, creating infinite possibilities for radio drama. Another tendency seen in Kristensen, Biering, and Bomholt, was an interest in the more media specific conditions of radio drama, and the acknowledgement of them as a necessary step towards improving the genre. Central to all of the arguments is the use of comparisons to locate the new genre within the artistic spectrum. The most common comparisons point towards stage drama and (silent) film, while Branner was alone with his radical comparison to music and abstraction. Today, the majority of radio dramas produced at the DBC are constructed around classic narratives combined with the filmic soundscapes made possible by the latest technology.

2.1.3. Terminology and methodology

After the initial radio debates of the 1930s and 40s, the field fell more or less silent until the early 60s, when English, German and Danish publications on radio drama began appearing. In between was a 20-year gap, which might be explained by several factors: the fact that the novelty of the medium was wearing off, while broadcasters were getting a more firm grasp on its genres; the intrusion of WWII, which put a temporary halt to technical and aesthetic experiments that might otherwise have stirred new debates; and finally, and most importantly, the introduction of television in the late 1920s and 30s that quickly overshadowed the now “old” radio medium. Even in Denmark, where television was not introduced as an official part of the DBC until 1951, the potential competition already made radio commentators hesitate in the 1930s:

Today, radio drama is probably at the beginning of its development, that is, if a too early introduced television does not break everything to pieces and reduce radio drama to broadcast theatre or talking pictures - in that case goodnight to its possibilities of becoming an independent genre!⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Op.cit. Bang, p. 6. Original version: “Hørespillet staar sikkert i Dag ved Begyndelsen af sin Udvikling, hvis ikke et for tidligt kommende Fjernsyn slaar det hele i Stykker og reducerer Hørespillet til transmitteret Skuespil eller Talefilm - for saa God Nat til de Muligheder det nu har for at blive en selvstændig Kunststart!” Howard Fink also mentions the “anxious glares over the shoulder at the rival, television.” as a common feeling in American radio drama during the early 1940s. Fink, Howard: “The Sponsor’s v. The Nation’s Choice: North American Radio Drama” in: Lewis, Peter (ed.): *Radio Drama*, Longman, London and New York, 1981. Pp. 185-244. Quotation from p. 197.

However, as Ib Poulsen et al. (1999)⁵⁹ argued, when studies on the radio medium did finally reappear in the 1960s, they were partly subsumed by the recently developed field of media studies, which at that time tended towards institutional approaches and a focus on television. This does not mean that there were no developments within radio studies. Indeed Donald McWhinnie (1959)⁶⁰ wrote an introduction to the fundamentals of radio, while Friedrich Knilli (1961)⁶¹ covered radio drama and also published a selection of texts on radio semiotics (1970)⁶², just to mention a few. In Denmark Quist (1962)⁶³ is probably the best-known contributor from the 1960s. He was a radio technician from the DBC whose short introduction to the technical aspects of radio drama production is surprisingly relevant even today. He argued for the equality of the four codes of radio (sounds, words, silence, and music), seeing a radio drama production as a “synthesis of separate parts”⁶⁴ made possible by the introduction of the magnetic tape at the DBC in the beginning of the 1950s. Even though his aim was more technical, his introduction of practical terms concerning microphone placement, acoustics, editing etc. resulted in an aesthetic description. The remarkable point about Quist, is that he, unlike the Danish predecessors I mentioned in chapter 2.1.2., did not foreground one effect or aspect in particular, but considered them all equally important. This was surely a reflection of his profession as a technician with the responsibility of merging all of the separate elements delivered to him by actors, sound directors, and directors. In that sense it represents the most holistic approach to radio drama in the discussion thus far.

The 1980s and 90s saw new attempts at developing a terminology and methodology specifically for radio analysis, and with a much more practical dimension than in the early radio aesthetic debates. Crisell (1994, orig. 1986) introduced his semiotic take on radio aesthetics, dividing it into four basic codes (sounds, words, silence, and music - just like Quist did almost 20 years earlier) and three modes of representation (index, icon, symbol). He delivered a valuable taxonomy of the different expressions of radio as

⁵⁹ Poulsen, Ib, et al.: "Radioforskning - en översikt" in: *N O R D I C O M - Information*, ed. 3, 1999. Pp. 59-72.

⁶⁰ McWhinnie, Donald: *The Art of Radio*, Faber and Faber, London, 1959.

⁶¹ Knilli, Friedrich: *Das Hörspiel. Mittel und Möglichkeiten eines totalen Schallspiels*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1961.

⁶² Knilli, Friedrich: *Versuche zu einer Semiotik des Radios*, Metzler, Stuttgart, 1970.

⁶³ Op.cit. Quist (1962).

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 378. Original version: "en syntese af enkeltheder".

well as marking a return to the supremacy of the word that dominated the early discussions (Bang, Bomholt, Branner and Werner).⁶⁵ Even though Crisell has since found a wider application as a basis for radio analysis among Danish students, the approach is also a somewhat closed one. While it does help with the analysis (in the sense of “separation (and identification) of elements”), its value does not extend far beyond the world of semiotics. What it lacks is a consideration for the whole of a given radio production and a method for including the semiotic observations fruitfully in a larger analysis. A more practical methodology for radio analysis was developed by Hanne Bruun & Kirsten Frandsen (1991)⁶⁶ based on their observations of the radio feature. Bruun & Frandsen introduced an extensive catalogue of analytical terms for different categories of montages and narrators. Despite their significant contribution to the understanding of the more technical aspects of features (the montage forms), they also revealed affinities with literary analysis in their attempt at entering radio productions into a linear format in the shape of their notation sheet. According to Elke Huwiler (2005)⁶⁷, this tendency to consider radio drama a literary or dramatic art form has also been prevalent in the German and British traditions.⁶⁸ However, since it does not take the more *radiophonic* qualities of radio drama into consideration, Huwiler presented a methodology that combined semiotic and postclassical narratology-approaches with a focus on the non-verbal aspects of radio drama. She further criticised how the emphasis on literary radio drama had often led to analyses based solely on manuscripts, since the fact that they could be printed showed them “[...] unable to convey the unique possibilities of the radio play as an art form in its own right.”⁶⁹ Though I agree that a manuscript is hardly sufficient material for performing a radio drama analysis, it is often the only option when dealing with productions from the first

⁶⁵ One exception is Arnheim, who distinguished between the sound of the word and the meaning of the word, clearly favouring the former “[...] the elemental force lies in the sound, which effects everyone more directly than the meaning of the word, and all radio art must make this fact its starting-point.” Op.cit. Arnheim, (1971), p. 28.

⁶⁶ Bruun, Hanne and Frandsen, Kirsten: “Radioæstetik og analysemetode” in: *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, vol. 7, ed. 15, 1991. Pp. 67-82.

⁶⁷ Huwiler, Elke: “Storytelling by sound: a theoretical frame for radio drama analysis” in: *The Radio Journal - International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, vol. 3, ed. 1, 2005. Pp. 45-59. Although I will briefly mention another text published by Huwiler in the same year, this is the text I am referring to in future references to Huwiler (2005).

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 45-46.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 50.

decades of the genre.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the acoustic dimension is not the only difference between radio drama and literature, and finally, historians of drama have always had to reconstruct classical Greek performances and Elisabethan theatre practices from written material alone. Whether working with the manuscript for an adaptation or a play written specifically for radio, radio drama can be treated on its own terms if the analyst takes matters of address, institution, reception, and scheduling into consideration. That way, the same drama text may take on another meaning altogether when related to the conditions of the radio medium, such as public service demands, immediacy, the fleeting nature of its transmission, and the possible simultaneity of mass reception. This is by no means a campaign for the institutional or any other kind of context-related analyses, rather, I am recognising the fact that conditions such as these can influence radio drama even on the most text specific or aesthetic levels.⁷¹ That is what I aim to prove with my analyses in chapters 5 and 6.

Leaving the issue of radio drama aside for the moment, others have attempted to grasp the radio medium as a whole in the tradition of Arnheim and, to an even greater extent, Crisell. With a combination of practical and theoretical approach, Martin Shingler & Cindy Wieringa (1998) made a contribution towards “[...] the establishment of a more wide-ranging theoretical, analytical and “academic” approach to radio.”⁷² They called for more radio aesthetic explorations and delivered their own “handbook” with a focus on the use of spoken word, non-verbal codes, invisibility, and listener relations. An important point is their challenging of Arnheim and Crisell’s use of the word “blindness” as one of radio’s fundamental characteristics, which Shingler & Wieringa proposed to exchange for the more positive “invisibility”.⁷³ More than just a battle of terms, this represents a departure from the visual hegemony that influenced the terminology of even the more aurally oriented debaters (Arnheim, Quist, Crisell, Branner, Soya,

⁷⁰ This is an issue that Huwiler will have been familiar with from writing about early German radio drama in: Huwiler, Elke: "80 Jahre Hörspiel. Die Entwicklung des Genres zu einer eigenständigen Kunstform" in: *Neophilologus*, vol. 89, 2005. Pp. 89-114.

⁷¹ While Huwiler (2005) acknowledges the ability of the radio medium to *shape* stories (p. 52), she does not seem to include that fact as a part of a manuscript-based analysis. But - does the radio manuscript, like any other type of drama text, not require due consideration for its “staging”? In other words: the radio drama text is as much a manual as it is a piece of literature and therefore a manuscript analysis does not necessarily entail “mere” literary analysis.

⁷² Op.cit. Shingler & Wieringa (1998), pp. x-xi.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 74.

Kristensen etc.). Richard J. Hand & Mary Traynor (2011)⁷⁴ took on a similarly fundamental enterprise on behalf of the radio drama genre, providing an historical and theoretical context as well as practical introductions to radio drama production. Recently, Neil Verma (2012)⁷⁵ published an extensive study on early American radio drama with a particular focus on the *sound* of several thousand dramas from the 1930s-50s. This focus on the neglected aural aspects of the genre is one of more examples of the emerging interest in including a more aesthetic and programme focused approach along with other aspects.⁷⁶ Scholars such as Thomas Hajkowski (2010)⁷⁷, Elke Huwiler (2005), Poulsen (2006)⁷⁸, and Björck (2010)⁷⁹ add new, content- and form-oriented perspectives to the matters of institution, production and socio-historical context, which dominated part of the anglo-saxon branch of radio studies⁸⁰ (Asa Briggs (1961-95)⁸¹, Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991)⁸², Hendy (2007)⁸³). Rather than abandoning these “anglo-saxon issues” altogether, Verma and co. are re-entering the content, form, and sound of radio programmes into those very discussions. In the following I will briefly mention their different approaches to the narrative formats of radio drama and feature, leading to my own choice of methodology.

⁷⁴ Hand, Richard J. and Traynor, Mary: *The Radio Drama Handbook. Audio Drama in Context and Practice*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York and London, 2011. The title is probably a nod to Wilby & Conroy's *The Radio Handbook* from 1994.

⁷⁵ Verma, Neil: *Theater of Mind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012.

⁷⁶ The inclusion of audio sources has also created an emerging field within historical studies in recent years as Wolfgang Ernst pointed out in *Towards a Media-Archaeology of Sonic Articulations* - a talk given at the international conference *Hearing Modern History* (9th Blankensee Colloquium), Berlin, 17-19 June, 2010. David Hendy also made a popular addition to the field in the shape of a radio series/audiobook *Noise - A Human History* (2013).

⁷⁷ Hajkowski, Thomas: *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010.

⁷⁸ Op.cit. Poulsen (2006).

⁷⁹ Op.cit. Björck (2010).

⁸⁰ Undoubtedly this development has been encouraged by the vast amount of internal documentation of the BBC available at the BBC Written Archives in Caversham, UK. Though similar documents concerning the DBC do exist in Denmark, they have yet to be made properly available in terms of indexing and cataloguing at Rigsarkivet (The State Archives). I will return to this point briefly in chapter 3.2.

⁸¹ Briggs, Asa: *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961-95.

⁸² Scannell, Paddy and Cardiff, David: *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Vol. 1, 1922-1939: Serving the Nation*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1991. Having established part of the institutional and production-related context of British broadcasting in this volume, Scannell also turned his focus towards the programmes in op.cit. Scannell (1996).

⁸³ Hendy, David: *Life on Air: a History of Radio Four*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

2.1.4. Close reading and programme focus

The past decade has seen several studies, which display a new sensitivity toward single programmes, genres, and formats, but there is room for further exploration still. Though the examples in question represent many different strategies, they generally share an interest in the more specific output of radio. Following her comprehensive book on the first 30 years of American broadcasting from 1997⁸⁴, Michele Hilmes narrows in on one particular serial, *Front Line Family* (BBC, 1941-48) in her article from (2006).⁸⁵ Even if Hilmes is more interested in the “editorial” and political reasons for its emergence in 1942 than in its actual content, the mere act of isolating a single example from radio history points towards studies such as my own. At the same time, the case of *Front Line Family* is another, and more blatant example of a popular series being used as a vehicle for public information and education than THF.⁸⁶ In this case it was used for war propaganda, while THF had a more “nation building” objective.

Another strategy is to focus on a particular format or genre, as is the case with Poulsen (2006)⁸⁷ and Björck (2010). Poulsen published an extensive study of the origins of the feature genre in Denmark from its early stages as “listening images” to the different artistic and politically engaged “montages” of the late 20th century. With a combination of social history, and textual and reception analyses, he also presents detailed linguistic observations and transcribed segments from single productions. Thereby he finds that the feature genre was generally used for exploring the living conditions in the modern world and actively invited the listeners to reflect on the critical issues it presented.

Björck’s project is similar in her focus on the development of the radio family serial genre and its relation to social change in Sweden. The study encompasses 23 examples throughout the 20th century, the sheer number of which is a testament to the popularity

⁸⁴ Op.cit. Hilmes (1997).

⁸⁵ Hilmes, Michele: "Front Line Family: 'Women's culture' comes to the BBC" in: *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 29, ed. 1, 2006. Pp. 5-29.

⁸⁶ Probably the most famous example of this serial strategy is *The Archers* (BBC, 1951-now), which was famously introduced as an informative campaign for rural life when agriculture was needed to help rebuild Britain amidst postwar rationing. Even though this strategy has since softened considerably, there is still an agricultural story editor connected to the production today.

⁸⁷ Op.cit. Poulsen (2006).

of the genre in Sweden.⁸⁸ A few of the serials are afforded a full chapter such as *Ingenjör Björck med familj* (SR, 1936-43), a Swedish equivalent of THF. This choice gives Björck the opportunity to perform textual analyses as well as explore listener statistics, letters, contracts, manuscripts etc. As a result, she not only concludes that “the family” is generally portrayed as “an active participant in the process of modernization”, she also “insist[s] on going into detail, seeing most examples as bearers of both aspects [conservative and radical tendencies], in different combinations.”⁸⁹

A similar approach is taken by Skoog (2010)⁹⁰ in her thorough study of women’s radio as a programme category, as well as a platform for the development of female radio producers. Skoog conducts case studies of the talk programme *Woman’s Hour* (BBC, 1946-now) and the daily serial *Mrs Dale’s Diary* (BBC, 1948-69), and shows how women’s radio could be seen as a central arena for the forming of the post-war British woman into an active citizen and consumer. Although Skoog’s main concern is with the triangle of production, reception, and policy, she also enters into the realm of dialogue and storylines to show the *what* that was being changed by these three aspects. This *what*, as well as the programme-internal and specific *how* of the episodes is also my concern with THF, which will be combined with institutional, production- and reception-related aspects in order to paint a full picture of the series.

The importance of including the actual programmes in the study of radio was pointed out by Hajkowski (2010) in his book on the BBC and national identity:

But policy-making at the level of the Board of Governors or Control Board tells us little about the motives or intent of program-makers, and even less about what Britons actually heard through their headphones or radio speakers. Few listeners were aware of the BBC’s policies or the intricacies of its organization, but millions listened to the program everyday. Programs are key historical artifacts, at once the end product of policy and a link between institutions and public, production and reception.⁹¹

I can only agree that it is essential to remember the programmes, which are after all the reason for the countless public and internal debates, policies, meetings, and

⁸⁸ As a comparison there have only been two noteworthy examples of its kind in Denmark, both of which were very successful: THF (DBC, 1929-49) and *Karlsens Kvarter* (DBC, 1967-84).

⁸⁹ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 332 (both quotations).

⁹⁰ Op.cit. Skoog (2010).

⁹¹ Op.cit. Hajkowski (2010). p. 4.

correspondences featured in institutional analyses of radio. Even if we may not always have the broadcast versions available today, sources such as manuscripts and public reactions in the press can provide ample material for understanding the programme, which existed in between. That is what I have done in the present thesis.

2.1.5. Conclusion

In the following I will recapitulate the preceding discussions but also add a few of my own observations regarding the close reading of radio. However, I do not mean to imply that I only approach THF through close reading. I also want to acknowledge the historical, institutional, and cultural realities of the THF series as a phenomenon, something, which is reflected in chapters 4 and 5.

Beginning with three different German texts, I introduced some of the earliest thoughts on radio after the establishment of national broadcasting institutions in the Western world. The first, Arnheim, was concerned with the aesthetic fundamentals of radio and the conditions under which (artistic) content is transmitted to the listeners, while Benjamin and Brecht were more preoccupied with the possibilities and dangers, which the new medium posed to the public. Many of the issues they raised surrounding radio's role in public education later resounded in the reception of THF as will be seen in chapters 5.4. and 5.5. When the public debates on radio started in Denmark, there was a particular discussion concerning the nature and future of radio drama, which shared Arnheim's approach. Both took the artistic value and status of radio (drama) for granted, but hardly ever made direct connections between the aesthetics and the *purpose* of the genre. By focusing intently on a particular genre, the artistic radio productions were exempt from discussions of value or notions of a public service, something, which was unthinkable to Brecht and Benjamin. To them, art and media products were never meant to be objects for passive consumption, but rather vehicles for active learning.

What the collected body of work shows is the fact that they were all still grappling with the medium and its genres in the 1930s and 40s, while THF was flourishing on Danish

radio and showing its own media aesthetic potential. However, the value of their observations not only lies in their contemporaneity with THF, but also in the issues they raised, which, although rather rudimentary at this point, still highlighted the main areas of interest relating to early radio drama. Discussions of blindness vs. mental images, word versus sound, conditions of production and reception, as well as the purpose of the finished production are all intertwined in my approach to THF.

In the more recent radio scholarship there has been a budding interest in exploring particular genres and individual programmes as was seen in Poulsen (2006), Skoog (2010), and Björck (2010). In all three cases it led to moments of close reading, which are similar to what I will be undertaking in chapter 6. As Björck mentions, this approach reveals just how much information is in the detail, and more importantly, how this kind of attention can nuance our readings of full programmes. This has also been my experience from working with THF, and I hope that it will point to the complexities often seen in even the most seemingly innocuous entertainment programmes on the radio. Furthermore, Hajkowski (2010) declared his belief in including the programmes in radio studies, even in his case, where the study is aimed at the issue of national identity rather than at a single genre or programme. Finally, Verma (2012) advocated for an increased attention to the sound of radio, which I will also try to do based on the few recordings still available of THF.

As was evident in the examples mentioned in chapter 2.1.3. the most detailed analytical methodologies for radio were often developed on the basis of artistic formats such as radio drama (Huwiler, 2005) and features (Poulsen, 2006 and Bruun & Frandsen, 1991). The level of technological and narrative complexity in those genres alone seems to call for a thorough terminology and directions for its use. Even if the case I have chosen would not commonly be classified as a work of art, its sheer extension in time and audience creates a complexity of its own. This is the reason I have included an analysis of THF over the years (chapter 5.3.) and of its afterlife and remediations (chapter 5.5.). As was also visible in the studies mentioned above, there seems to have been a need to “compensate” for the specific programme or genre focus with quantitative research, i.e. Verma’s several thousand radio dramas, Björck’s 23 serials from 80 years of radio, Poulsen’s different feature formats from a history of 70-80 years

etc. In that context, my study of a single radio series represents an even more qualitative approach, the advantages of which I hope to display throughout this thesis.

2.2. Radio Serials

2.2.1. Introduction

Indeed, of all the dramatic forms, serialisation and its extension the series have proved the most enduring products of the modern media, with television taking over and elaborating a pattern begun by radio.⁹²

The serial has been *a*, if not *the* dominant form in modern media culture, spanning from early, serialised novels over radio soaps to today's increasingly complex narratives of which series such as *The Wire* are arguably the epitome. Devised by the printed media as a way of attracting and maintaining subscribers, the serial narrative and its many sub-genres were already well developed before being adopted by the radio medium, after which many of the inventions were directly imported to television:

When it came to programming, television avoided experimentation by cannibalizing radio, stripping radio programming to the bone, and leaving for the most part only what radio began with [...]⁹³.

The Hansen Family first appeared in a period in radio history, when the serial narrative was slowly beginning to realise its potential for capturing the attention of mass audiences; it since grew into an institution within the DBC. Most other comparable international series from this period were conceived within a commercial context, which makes THF's introduction in Danish public service broadcasting all the more remarkable.⁹⁴ As such, the case of THF displays how the introduction of serial formats

⁹² Drakakis, John: "British Radio Drama" in: Drakakis, John (ed.): Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981. Pp. 1-37. Quotation from p. 11.

⁹³ Hagedorn, Roger: "Doubtless to be Continued. A Brief History of Serial Narrative" in: Allen, Robert C. (ed.): *To Be Continued...Soap Operas Around the World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995. Pp. 27-49. Quotation from p. 37.

⁹⁴ THF began as a series of single "situations". Judging by the radio schedules it did not become a regular feature until August 1929, four months after its inception. This might explain the smooth introduction of

(among other things) in public service broadcasting in a sense internalised the clichéd dichotomy between the “serious” and paternalistic approach of public service broadcasting and the constant courting of advertisers and audiences often considered characteristic of commercial broadcasting.⁹⁵ Hilmes (2006) argues that it was the personal (dis-)taste of the Head of the BBC Drama Department Val Gielgud, which delayed the introduction of soap operas to the BBC, since he saw them as the incarnation of all that was vulgar and commercial (i.e. American).⁹⁶ However, this hesitation apparently did not extend to all serial formats, since, as I have mentioned before, the sketch series *The Buggins Family* was already introduced on the BBC in 1925. As far as I can tell, the difference in attitude was related to the question of continuity vs. episodicity. To put it crudely, while the former phenomenon often has an addictive effect (and an ensuing commercial value), the latter aims at momentary entertainment (and hence is more “innocent”). Either way, the DBC was also open to the family serial format from an early stage, thus becoming the first amongst the Nordic countries to launch a domestic serial of the American ilk, as mentioned in chapter 1.⁹⁷ Therefore, the mere fact of its early introduction and 20 year-run on the DBC makes it an exception worth looking into. Furthermore, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter of this thesis, it is a fact, which challenges the popular conception of the state monopoly years of the DBC (approx. 1925-50)⁹⁸ as predominantly paternalistic. In order to properly understand this phenomenon, I will discuss central studies of the

the serial format at the DBC along with the fact that the author of the series, Jens Locher, seemed to have an eye for commercial formats. See chapter 4.4 for further details about Locher.

⁹⁵ Hilmes (1997, p. 153) and Murray (2002, p. 142) mention the same internal struggles in the commercial stations, which also had to argue for the high cultural value and “standards of taste” of their broadcasts in order to retain their broadcasting privileges. Murray, Matthew: “The Tendency to Deprave and Corrupt Morals”. Regulation and Irregular Sexuality in Golden Age Radio Comedy” in: Hilmes, Michele and Loviglio, Jason (eds.): *Radio Reader. Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, Routledge, New York and London, 2002. Pp. 135-157.

⁹⁶ Op.cit. Hilmes (2006), p. 5.

⁹⁷ In addition to the fact that there have only been two larger and successful radio series on the DBC. Interestingly, I have not come across any references to soaps, however insignificant or short-lived. Together, these observations suggest that the serial format had a rather different trajectory in Denmark than in most of the other countries I have referred to in this study.

⁹⁸ The term “monopoly years” is a contested one in Danish media history. It seems that every new initiative in broadcasting has triggered reports of the monopoly being broken, depending on which “monopoly” is referred to. The term was used when the second national broadcaster TV2 started in 1988, and again when the second talk radio station Radio24syv was established in 2010. However, when I refer to “the monopoly years”, I mean the period in which there was only one national radio station and no television yet. This ended in 1951 with the introduction of the radio “Programme 2” (P2) and the first television broadcasts, both on the DBC.

radio serial narrative, including their perspectives on gender, sexuality, propaganda, and commercial uses.

The so-called “Golden Age”⁹⁹ of American radio (serials) has been a very frequent subject of study (Fink (1981), Hilmes (1997), Robert Brown (1998)¹⁰⁰, Murray (2002), Alison McCracken (2002)¹⁰¹, Loviglio (2005)¹⁰², Verma (2012)), and early British serials have earned a few studies and references too (Hilmes (2006), Skoog (2010), Hendy (2003)¹⁰³). However, studies of their Nordic equivalents are few and far in between, especially in Denmark where, as mentioned previously, there have only been two family serials in the first 50 years of radio. Therefore Björck’s (2010) book on the radio family serial is by far the most comprehensive and interesting source for the time being. Because of the sheer number of different approaches and the many similarities between THF and the American formats¹⁰⁴, I have chosen to focus mainly on texts concerned with radio in the 1930s and 40s in the following.

2.2.2. Radio drama vs. radio serials

The ongoing debate of “high” vs “low” culture, between “serious” and “popular” broadcasting has been central to the institution since its inception in the 1920s. Discussions of taste, culture, and the responsibilities of the broadcasters appear on all levels of operation, within the institutions and in the public realm. They even appear within the single genres and radio drama is no exception. Hence, the majority of books published on radio drama focus mainly on the more “artistic” single plays (e.g. Beckett

⁹⁹ This is a widely used term in the literature on the American soap referring to the period in the 1930s and 40s in American commercial broadcasting, when serial formats were shaped and experienced their heyday on the radio. This is also the way I use the term - mainly as a reference to the period and the different serial formats connected to it (soaps, thrillers, mysteries and comedy shows). Therefore it is not meant as an evaluation of the quality of the actual shows nor do I mean to disregard any other, possibly “golden” periods of American broadcasting.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, Robert J.: "Part I: The "Radio President"" in: *Manipulating the Ether. The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America*, McFarland & Company, North Carolina and London, 1998. Pp. 7-129.

¹⁰¹ McCracken, Allison: "Scary Women and Scarred Men. *Suspense*, Gender Trouble, and Postwar Change, 1942-50" in: Op.cit. Hilmes and Loviglio (2002). Pp. 183-207.

¹⁰² Loviglio, Jason: *Radio's Intimate Public, Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005.

¹⁰³ Hendy, David: "Televisions pre-history: Radio (The Origins of the Soap Opera)" in: Hilmes, Michele (ed.): *The Television History Book*, BFI, London, 2003. Pp. 4-9.

¹⁰⁴ I will elaborate on these similarities in chapter 3.1.

and Pinter in a British context), leaving the serials out of the equation. Radio scholars such as Knilli (1961), Drakakis (1981), and Ian Rodger (1982)¹⁰⁵ more or less ignore the serial, and Crisell (1994), though devoting separate chapters to “Radio Drama” and “Comedy and Light entertainment”, primarily makes references to the *The Archers* (BBC, 1951-now). A notable exception among the main works and edited volumes on radio drama is Peter Lewis (1981)¹⁰⁶, who includes two articles by David Wade (1981)¹⁰⁷ and Fink, which I will discuss below. The division is even reflected in Chignell (2009)¹⁰⁸, where “Drama” and “Serials and Soaps” are described in separate articles. Not only does this differentiation point to a hierarchy in the genres but, more importantly, it highlights the fundamental differences between the two. Although they both consist of dramatic and mainly fictional material, the difference in their production processes as well as in their organisation of the dramatic content has significant influence over the final products and their reception. For one, the serial was originally connected to mass production techniques, meant to provide content for the radio schedule at a steady pace and a minimal cost.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the single play was generally regarded as a representative of higher artistic integrity, and the different choices involved with its production were expected to be made based on aesthetic reasoning rather than commercial purposes. The main difference in terms of reception is the one between reception as a single event vs. a sequence of (partial) events. However, as Fink (1981) pointed out in connection to American Golden Age radio, the partition of radio drama to one side and serials to the other is an oversimplification; it fails to account for the “cross-fertilisation”¹¹⁰ between the two, especially moving in the direction from serials to serious drama.¹¹¹ For one thing, the sheer proliferation of American serials during the 1930s and 1940s meant that any experiment conducted in that arena would reach a

¹⁰⁵ Rodger, Ian: *Radio Drama*, Macmillan, London, 1982.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, Peter E.: *Radio Drama*, Longman, London, 1981.

¹⁰⁷ Wade, David: “Popular Radio Drama” in: Lewis, Peter (ed.): *Radio Drama*, Longman, London and New York, 1981. Pp. 91-110.

¹⁰⁸ Chignell, Hugh: *Key Concepts in Radio Studies*, SAGE, Los Angeles and London, 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Op.cit. Hendy (2003), pp. 4-9.

¹¹⁰ Op.cit. Fink (1981), p. 193.

¹¹¹ In a Danish context, however, this cross-fertilisation may not have been quite as extensive as it was within American broadcasting, since there was only one large broadcasting institution in Denmark until 1988, and only one radio programme until 1951. Any local stations would hardly have had the means and the expertise to create radio drama, let alone carry out experiments. One example of technically advanced popular drama though, was *Mordets Melodi* (1943), a single noir drama that made the most of radio’s invisibility and the horror of disembodied voices. I will return to this production further below.

larger audience and be tested across more hours than any serious drama could ever dream of. Moreover the often formulaic storylines that have frequently made a serial genre such as crime fiction the object of derision, was also a factor in allowing room for technical experiments.¹¹² This observation is supported by Nordberg (1995)¹¹³, though with reference to the drawbacks of the theatrical ancestry of serious radio drama:

There is good reason to assume that radio crime fiction has led the development of the unique radio drama. While serious radio drama has been held back by a strong stage tradition, radio crime fiction has been forced to explore and develop new modes of expression in the medium because of its demands for intense, clear and engaging storytelling.¹¹⁴

In this article, Nordberg also argues that radio is the medium best-suited medium for crime fiction because of its focus on the word (as underlined by many of the Danish and German radio aesthetes mentioned in chapter 2.1.), as well as of its ability to discretely indicate clues and communicate psychological developments. In the next chapter (2.2.3.) we shall see an example of the psychological effects in an episode from the *Suspense* series (CBS, 1942-62) called *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1943). Here, the main character goes through a subtle transformation from concerned citizen, past fretful woman, to hysterical victim in her frustration over other people's mechanical responses to her outcry and her physical inability to take action herself.

Another enlightening contribution to the international field is Hagedorn's (1995) history of the serial narrative, which inscribes the radio serial in a larger history of the format. More importantly, he discusses the relation between its characteristic "episodicity" and its extreme commodification across different media platforms:¹¹⁵ "Episodicity functions as the textual sign of the serial's material existence as merchandise and, therefore, of the discourse established between the producing

¹¹² Op.cit. Fink (1981), p. 195.

¹¹³ Nordberg, Nils: "Døden i eteren - den radiofoniske kriminalhistorien" in: Elgurén, Alexander and Engelstad, Audun (eds.): *Under lupen. Essays om kriminallitteratur*, Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, Otta, 1995. Pp. 135-155.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 134. Original version: "Det er god grunn til å anta at kriminalhørspillet har ført an i utviklingen av radiodramaets egenart. Mens det seriøse hørespill har ligget under for en seiglivet scenisk tradisjon, har radiokrimien, med sine krav til fortettet, klar og engasjerende story-telling, vært nødt til å utforske og utvikle alle uttrykksmidler i mediet."

¹¹⁵ For an earlier take on the subject in connection to the soap, see Allen, Robert C: "The Soap Opera as Commodity and Commodifier" in: Allen, Robert C.: *Speaking of Soap Operas*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1988. Pp. 45-61.

industry and the consuming public.”¹¹⁶ The main raison d’être of any serial narrative, so Hagedorn explains, has been as a kind of three-pronged promotional strategy: simultaneously promoting further episodes of the same serial, other products by the same network/company, and the medium in which it has been made available. On a more obvious level, serial narratives have also promoted consumer products from sponsors on commercial networks. Hagedorn continues:

[...] when media industries decide to target a new sector of the population in order to expand their market share, they have consistently turned to serials as a solution, especially when interested in targeting women and children.¹¹⁷

Historically, this linking of the female sex and the serial format has been very common, particularly in the negative reception of daytime soaps¹¹⁸ as Hilmes (1997¹¹⁹ and 2006¹²⁰), McCracken (2002)¹²¹, and Skoog (2010)¹²² have shown. Thus they discuss the gendering of debates on genre, quality, and public service, and mention the fearful notions of a melodramatic and unstable female audience often entertained by critics of the genre – in America as well as in England. These contributions will be discussed further in the following paragraph.

2.2.3. Gender and sexuality

Murray (2002) turns to regulation and the depiction of sexuality in American Golden Age shows, identifying two particular character types, “the loose woman” and “the lavender gentleman”, which questioned classic notions of heterosexuality though, claims Murray, perhaps not with the degree of subversion one might expect. The loose woman was incarnated in Mae West in a 1937 appearance on the show *The Chase & Sanborn Hour* (NBC, 1929-48), which was heavily criticised for its sexual content. The

¹¹⁶ Op.cit. Hagedorn (1995), p. 28.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 41.

¹¹⁸ To be clear, the negative reception mainly included contemporary cultural commentators and radio critics, while the public was generally much more positively inclined towards soaps.

¹¹⁹ Op.cit. Hilmes (1997), esp. in chapter 6.

¹²⁰ Op.cit. Hilmes (2006), p. 5.

¹²¹ Op.cit. McCracken (2002), pp. 183-207.

¹²² Skoog (2010), e.g. p. 201.

ensuing questioning of the efficacy of radio censorship, turned out to be relatively easy to expel by laying the blame on the live-improvisations of West, who was already infamous for her sexual demeanor. The so-called lavender gentleman on the other hand, walked the narrow line between displaying impeccable manners as well as effeminate and, by association, sexually aberrant behavior. Transgressions of that type were much harder to avoid via censorship, as the censors would have had to anticipate any so-called “swishy” renderings of the material, which might change its literal meaning. These cases from Murray wonderfully display the difference between a written manuscript and its vocal interpretation on the air, something which also poses a great challenge to scholars in early radio history, where the manuscript is often the only version left of a broadcast.¹²³ Finally, the cases are a testament to the ability of the radio medium to engage its audiences in active (and uncontrollable) co-creation, which posed a great threat in the eyes of American radio officials:

This intrinsic quality constituted both a bane and a benefit to the industry. It made the medium distinctive and engaging, but because of its heavy reliance on mental imagery and direct appeal to the emotions, the potential for arousing what NBC censors phrased “base trends of the imagination” remained a constant source of trepidation to the networks.¹²⁴

Murray points out that this notion indirectly addresses Arnheim’s (1971) distaste for the reliance on the listener’s co-creative abilities. As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, Arnheim believed that the radio artist should be in full control of his production so that no further “completion” would be necessary. In a sense, that was what the radio censors attempted to do: to lock down particular interpretations of the scripted words, so that a word was just a word, with no innuendo or imagination needed. On the other hand, the scriptwriters’ deliberate play on “language’s complexity and interpretive openness [in order] to aurally titillate listeners”¹²⁵ made the censors’ quest impossible. For the same reason, the comedic genres (THF included) are particularly difficult to interpret, with their ability to walk the line between entertainment and criticism, suggesting a multitude of meanings. This difficulty of interpretation increases exponentially with time, since the cultural and linguistic

¹²³ I will return to this challenge in relation to the specific case of THF in chapter 5.2.

¹²⁴ Op.cit. Murray (2002), p. 141.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

contexts necessary to decode the text have inevitably changed. Hence the discussion of my term “Nudges” in chapters 6.1. and 6.2.6., where the limits of historical empathy are put to the test.

In her article on American radio thrillers, McCracken (2002) explores the American context, and particularly gender roles in the aftermath of WWII. Her focus is on the *Suspense* series as a stage where postwar tensions between the sexes were played out. According to McCracken, women depicted as independent and troublesome, and men depicted as emasculated wrecks mirrored the difficulty of the situation after WWII, when women were expected to return to their homes after having served their country in the job market during the war. The episode *Sorry, Wrong Number*¹²⁶ is about a woman in a wheel chair, who overhears someone planning a murder on the phone and tries to prevent it, only to find that she is the target. The programme set the standard for the *Suspense* series, with a heightened attention to female leads, psychological developments and gothic horror. McCracken claims that the true target of the murderer in the episode was the shrill voice of the female lead¹²⁷, famously portrayed by actress Agnes Moorehead. Upon listening to the programme, this astute observation is further confirmed - there is a most definite play on Moorehead's voice. McCracken argues that the series played on “the horror of the disembodied voice” and in particular the discomfiting sound of the woman's voice, which must be silenced (sic). Though at times more tentatively expressed than documented, McCracken's hypothesis is interesting in its inclusion of the aural dimension of the radio thrillers as examples of the increased and ambiguous presence of aggressive female characters on the air. Similarly, the emasculated male characters were given space to air their feelings and pathological anxieties in a way that still allowed them some human dignity.

¹²⁶ Rather interestingly, a similar landmark amongst original radio thrillers in the noir/gothic tradition premiered on the DBC on the very same night, 25 May 1943: *Mordets Melodi* (The Melody of Murder). Though not exactly a domestic thriller, it contained many of the same elements that McCracken highlights in *Suspense*, such as the strong female character, the stalking ex-husband, emasculated men, shrill voices, and transgressive gender representations. There is certainly material for an interesting comparative study at some point in the future.

¹²⁷ Another, though quite different example of the focus on the sound of the female is presented by Murray (2002), who quotes a reaction to Mae West's on-air presence: “The lewd suggestiveness mingled with *the sound from her lips*, makes one think she should wear a veil over the lower part of her face to hide her nudity.” (Quoted on p. 140. My italics.) Only here, it is not the independent (professional) woman's voice threatening listeners with its shrillness, but the overt and uncontrollable sexuality of a free-spirited temptress.

While neither Murray nor McCracken focus directly on the serial context of their examples, their discussions are embedded in the entertainment value, which has so often been the central aspect of serials. Crime fiction and comedy are both extremely popular genres within the serial narrative and their content is organised in accordance with their serialised reality in terms of providing a variety of shocks and laughs every time. Furthermore, the case of *Sorry, Wrong Number* instigated a kind of thematic seriality in the sense that it introduced the features that would become characteristic of *Suspense* as a whole, the same characteristics that McCracken follows through several other examples from the series.

Hilmes (1997) takes it upon herself to explore the practices and radio formats of women in the history of early American broadcasting, which also includes a study of the soap opera. Highlighting the division of the radio schedule into daytime for women and nighttime for men, she traces its many ramifications in terms of commercial interests, reception, content etc. A main consequence of the division is the “ghettoization”¹²⁸ of female radio employees and certain formats to daytime, which were considered feminine and appealing largely to an audience of neurotic and unstable women. Meanwhile, nighttime drama included the more “serious” *Lux Radio Theatre* and *Mercury Theatre of the Air* along with other programmes targeted at a male audience. However restrictive this may sound according to Hilmes, the division also offered the opportunity of producing more transgressive and challenging programmes “under the cover of daytime”¹²⁹, since the male audience, and the radio executives among them, were supposedly not listening. This approach is in line with Hilmes’ focus on the tensions between the accepted and the denied content on the air: “We must look for those elements that are silenced and muffled within the voice that speaks the loudest.”¹³⁰ These muffled voices on the radio belong mainly to women and other races than the “white” norm usually projected by American radio in the prewar years, and in terms of programmes, they belong to daytime serials and their ongoing negotiation of

¹²⁸ Op.cit. Hilmes (1997), p. 165.

¹²⁹ This is the title of chapter 6 in Hilmes (1997). As regards THF, it was neither a soap nor was it broadcast during the day. Yet, as I will show in chapters 5.4. and 5.5. it was still seen as mainly entertaining and inconsequential and in that sense operated “under cover of” its genre rather than its broadcasting time. Skoog (2010) also found the result of the division to be true in the case of *Mrs Dale’s Diary*, where the scriptwriters found the freedom to explore social tensions of the time.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. xvii (introduction).

women's experiences and opportunities. In this sense and in many others, Hilmes is in accordance with her colleague Loviglio, to whom I shall return shortly. Consequently Hilmes, though without exactly praising their quality, partly redeems the daytime soaps from their role as merely cheap entertainment for the neurotic housewife. She does so by pointing out how commercial interests ensured that the soap adhered to traditional family values, and yet, it managed to represent a "potential for resistance and transgression".¹³¹ A similar ambiguity is visible in the case of THF, even though it is not embedded in the same commercial structures as the American ones. The THF universe seems conservative to its core and yet the series often remains ambiguous about the topics it raises in the single episodes.¹³² Skoog's (2010) aforementioned thesis has a similar objective, though in relation to the women's history of the BBC. As mentioned earlier, she uses her two case studies of *Women's Hour* and *Mrs Dale's Diary* for exploring the contribution of female radio employees and women's programmes to the BBC as a whole; as examples of the vivid discussions they raised among critics and listeners concerning both the content of the programmes (issues of marriage, gender roles, etc.) and their relation to public service broadcasting (taste, quality). Moreover, Skoog is not only interested in the history of radio, but also in using radio as an "historian" (a term from Kate Lacey) meaning that historical radio programmes are more than mere points in the history of the radio medium. They are also important historical documents of social change. In Skoog's case this means an interest in the way women's programmes at the BBC have mirrored society and issues of gender in postwar Britain. Incidentally, this observation is similar to my approach to THF, since I am focusing on the transformation of current events in a fictional narrative, insisting that there is just as much historical "witness" in the real events portrayed in fiction as in the narrative strategies that transform them.

¹³¹ Ibid. p. xx (introduction).

¹³² One example of this is can be seen in chapter 6.2.2.

2.2.4. Domesticity, education, and propaganda

One Man's Family is dedicated to the proposition that the American family is the bulwark of the American nation and that so long as family life as we know it thrives this America will be a good place in which to live.¹³³

(Speaker introduction to the American radio serial *One Man's Family* from 1949)

As was evident in McCracken's (2002) reading of the *Suspense* series, there is plenty of thriller potential in the domestic setting, the calm haven of the home suddenly turning into a claustrophobic death trap: "The domestic ideal can also be a nightmare in which husbands are either powerless to protect women or are actively working to seal their doom."¹³⁴ This approach to the domestic serial harnesses its effects from the cliché of the home as the nest of the nuclear family,¹³⁵ an image which radio has done much to project. Countless sitcoms, soaps, and domestic dramas as well as the more factual housewife programmes have idealised and reflected the middle-class home on the airwaves.¹³⁶ Particularly as a microcosm of the larger "family" of the state or kingdom.¹³⁷ The power of this image and its idyllic intimacy has also been exploited for social and political purposes which several studies, as well as president Franklin D. Roosevelt's so-called "Fireside Chats" (CBS?, 1933-44), have shown.¹³⁸ McCracken (2002) even mentions the image of the home in connection to the Cold War: "The promotion of the suburban domestic ideal was part of a social containment plan to help

¹³³ Excerpt from an unusual introduction to the American radio serial *One Man's Family* (NBC, 1932-59) on 07.04.1949. Compared to the other episodes available on archive.org, this introduction was exceptionally explicit about the objective of the serial. The reason for the alteration remains unclear, though it may have been meant to fit a Cold War purpose such as the one described by McCracken in the main text. Source: <http://archive.org/details/OneMansFamily>

¹³⁴ Op.cit. McCracken (2002), p. 190.

¹³⁵ A similar point is made by Neulander in connection to a French radio thriller in: Neulander, Joelle: *Programming National Identity: the Culture of Radio In 1930s France*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2009. P. 2.

¹³⁶ Examples of positive as well as negative portrayals of domestic life on the DBC will be presented in chapter 4.2.

¹³⁷ This parallel between individual families and the nation was, it seems, originally "reserved" for royal occasions, when the King was seen, or even saw himself, as the head of the national family. See Scannell and Cardiff (1991). Pp. 280 and 282. AND p. 464 in Robertson, Emma: "I Get a Real Kick Out of Big Ben": BBC Versions of Britishness on the Empire and Overseas Service, 1932-48" in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 28, ed. 4, 2008. Pp. 459-473. The same image of a national family was used during the broadcast of the funeral service of Danish King Christian X in 1947, to which I shall return in chapter 4.2.

¹³⁸ For more information on the "Fireside Chats" in the public/private divide of radio, see Loviglio, Jason: "The Fireside Chats and the New Deal" in Loviglio (2005) Pp. 1-38. AND Op.cit. Brown (1998), pp. 7-129.

make the United States seem strong and undivided during the Cold War by reducing the possibility of internal conflict.”¹³⁹ A direct parallel between national unity and familial bliss was thus understood and acknowledged as a powerful political image. Furthermore Hilmes, as previously mentioned, studies the case of what has been called the first British soap *Front Line Family*, which was introduced with the explicit objective of winning over American listeners to the idea of joining WWII.¹⁴⁰ This “higher purpose” was also what finally overruled the BBC’s Head of Drama’s reservations about the soap genre and made the soap a reality, though only “hidden away” on the North American Service and it is by no means an historical curiosity. Series today continue to serve their makers and audiences as is pointed out by Stephanie Hegarty 2012¹⁴¹, who highlights the general “edutainment” value of the soap genre, which ranges from the agricultural advice given on BBC’s own *The Archers* to Mexican and East African examples enlightening their audiences about literacy programmes and female genital mutilation¹⁴². An earlier example from Denmark was the family “comic strip”¹⁴³ called *The Walker Family*, which appeared in the Danish newspaper *Politiken* as a regular five-minute English course in the late 1930s and during WWII; a similar German course also existed before the war: *Die Familie Schultze*. Neither soaps nor domestic serials as such, these are nevertheless examples of how the family “template” was used as a didactic tool. It seems that the domestic setting or family setup provided the ideal sense of comfort as a basis for learning.¹⁴⁴ This might also explain the widespread phenomenon of what one might term the “familial address” in radio, where listeners are addressed as members of the same (national) family.

In order for this learning or indeed propaganda to work, there had to be an attraction in the serial, a point of identification involved. Wade identifies the common denominator

¹³⁹ Op.cit. McCracken (2002), pp. 199-200.

¹⁴⁰ Another entertaining pro-British initiative was launched with the American film *Mrs Miniver* (1942). Greer Garson portrayed a courageous English housewife, who faces a German pilot threatening her at gunpoint, while her husband (Walter Pigeon) and son are away on war duty.

¹⁴¹ Hegarty, Stephanie: “How Soap Operas Changed the World” in: *BBC News Magazine (online)*, Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17820571>, 27.04.2012.

¹⁴² To learn more about *The Archers*, see sections in Hendy (2007) AND Wade (1981), esp. pp. 106-09.

¹⁴³ The “comic strips” consisted of a single drawing accompanied by a short story about the family, complete with a vocabulary for the week.

¹⁴⁴ In chapter 6.2.2. we shall see how the Danish state also made use of THF as a platform for public information.

of serials dealing with social and moral issues as “relevance”.¹⁴⁵ He expands this further by observing that the audience often enjoys radio drama as an opportunity to “spy on [their] neighbours” and see “how other fractions of the population live”¹⁴⁶ (e.g. rural life in *The Archers*) while still maintaining a healthy appetite for the familiar and recognisable (e.g. family life in series like THF). Hence, relevance in terms of topical issues and recognisable situations is an important part of the attraction, which producers of soap operas seem eager to deliver. This corresponds with one of the two strategies that I see as central to most family and domestic serials: The *predictive/descriptive strategy* and the *normative strategy*.¹⁴⁷ When aiming for relevance and recognisability, the basic mode is *predictive* in the sense that it requires anticipation of the interests and preoccupations of its audience to *describe* the right phenomena. The *normative* strategy refers to the ways in which a projected image of say, an average family on the radio (or any other medium for that matter) often becomes an example to follow, indicating that “this is what we all do and so should you”.¹⁴⁸ These two strategies exist concurrently and are almost impossible to discern from one another. The normative strategy derives its power exactly from this quiet existence immediately below the descriptive level. That way, the slightly propagandistic content will remain undetected. As I will point out in chapter 6, this pattern resembles what Michael Billig (2010)¹⁴⁹ called “banal nationalism”, a term which refers to the ways in which the idea of “the nation” is constantly reconfirmed in inconspicuous phrases and everyday imagery to the point where the idea is naturalised.

The relationship between domesticity and propaganda or any other kind of social or cultural purpose is closely aligned with the drawing and constant negotiations of the boundaries between the public and the private spheres. Radio, as Loviglio (2005) has

¹⁴⁵ Op.cit. Wade (1981), p. 92. As indicated by the title of the present thesis, I am also exploring the notion of relevance on several occasions.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 103. Both quotations are from the same page.

¹⁴⁷ These strategies correspond with what Fink (1981) says about radio’s role in American culture: “Like all such cultural vehicles, it had the function of reflecting new cultural phenomena back to the people, as a *confirmation* and a *corrective*.” P. 194 (my italics).

¹⁴⁸ Björck (2010) has shown, that this is particularly the case with the family serial which was meant to depict the average family of a particular nation, in her case it is the Björck Family, which represents the Swedish norm. Pp. 72-76. I will return to this notion in chapter 6.2.3. where I will show the inconspicuous way in which local birthday customs are elevated to the norm in THF.

¹⁴⁹ Billig, Michael: *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London and California, 2010. (Orig. 1995).

shown, is a particularly important site for these negotiations, with its constant flow of “authorized transgressions” of boundaries that I referred to in chapter 1. As he further emphasises, the public/private dichotomy on the radio has both spatial and thematic dimensions. The spatial is related to the reception situation, which could often be a mixture of intimate listening in public spaces or vice versa. The thematic is related to the way in which different sensitive subjects such as race, gender, ethnicity, nationality etc were dealt with in transgressive ways that blurred and confirmed their boundaries. Together, these two dimensions form what Loviglio terms an “[...] intimate public [...] a new cultural space created by radio broadcasting in the 1930s that was marked by tensions between national and local, inclusion and exclusion, publicity and privacy.”¹⁵⁰ One example of this is seen in the 1930s American soap, which Loviglio sees as a place for the exploration of the private/public in relation to women and their position in life: where the changing heroines found new ways to define themselves by opposing and challenging the narrow confines allowed them by society:

The homes in the soap operas are sites where related tensions about nation and family are negotiated. The constant crises of the “traditional” family home operate both as a critique of the narrowness of this ideal end as the occasion for increased vigilance about the porous borders of the family home and the nation it represents.¹⁵¹

Again, Loviglio stresses that as with the many other borders radio negotiates, the home front is not only criticised but is also confirmed in the soaps, a tendency which is just as visible in THF. There, Mrs Hansen often complains about her boredom with being a housewife, dreaming of reclaiming her office job (which she does for a couple of episodes), of travelling, dining out, and in general leading a more spontaneous life; in the end, however, she always decides to remain at home, as she realises that the thought of adventure is more appealing than actually following it through.¹⁵² This tension remains present throughout its 20-year run. A similar approach is taken with the wife in the series *Ingenjör Björck med familj*. Here Björck (2010) notices the serial’s partiality to the woman’s perspective, which did not receive much attention from the radical women’s groups, and Björck concludes that it is a consequence of the “evasive

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 85.

¹⁵² I will return to Mrs Hansen and the other main characters in chapter 3.1.

diplomacy” of scriptwriter Alice Svensk.¹⁵³ It accounts for the ambiguous conservatism of this serial as a specific phenomenon but it is also true of the family serial format in general (THF included). This format depends on a recurring set of characters in a recognisable setting, thus making larger developments something to be avoided. That said, a few such larger developments do take place in THF and *Ingenjör Björck med familj*, albeit mainly in the more circumstantial aspects of their lives. One such example is when the Hansens move to a new apartment and several episodes cover the consequences, without it having any real influence on the basic dynamics between husband and wife, and thus, on the entire series. Concrete examples of this and many of the other aspects mentioned above will be discussed and analysed in chapter 6.

2.2.5. Conclusion

In the course of the previous discussions I have addressed some of the central issues in relation to the serial format on the radio as well as to THF as a particular case. As the history of the format has demonstrated, the serial narrative was created from a commercial necessity and this ancestry often prevails, even when appearing in a purely public service context. Often associated with mass production and bad taste, critics have had ample opportunity to attack the serial, and the soap in particular, with reference to the more “serious” requirements of broadcasting. Judging by the case of THF, this does not seem to have been an issue in a Danish context. As will become clear in the reception analysis in chapter 5.4., hardly anyone carried prejudices towards the serial format as such, as long as the content was neither morally nor socially irresponsible. It is hard to explain why there seems to have been such a difference in attitudes between the DBC/Denmark and the BBC, especially considering that the BBC has served as a role model for the DBC in many respects. Still, it is an important reminder that entertainment played a central part in attracting and maintaining a large audience, especially in the early years when radio had yet to establish itself as the central source of information and enjoyment. The difference in attitudes may also simply be a matter of a more liberal-minded culture in Denmark, but that remains speculation on my part.

¹⁵³ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 76.

On a general note, the “low” culture label on serial drama may in turn account for the near exclusion of the serial format from studies in radio drama, a division which Fink (1981) and Nordberg (1995) played their part in dispelling by referring to the contribution of popular formats to the development of radio drama in general. Other studies by Hilmes (1997), Murray (2002), McCracken (2002), and Loviglio (2005) explored thriller serials, comedy shows, and soaps as sites where tensions and boundaries related to race, sexuality and so on were constantly challenged and confirmed. For instance, Murray’s study of transgressive gender performances in 1930s radio comedies highlighted the interesting gap between a radio drama text and its aural interpretation. This again led to anxieties among radio producers and critics concerning the possibly uninhibited imaginations of the audience. Finally, Hilmes (1997) and Loviglio (2005) described different strategies for controlling the output of radio. In Hilmes’ case the immensely popular yet less “savoury” women’s programmes were confined to the daytime schedule and in Loviglio’s case, the boundaries between private and public were seen as important tools in controlling broadcast content.

Continuing the theme from this chapter concerning the different uses of the radio serial, the next chapter will elaborate on the different national agendas which radio has helped to serve. The literature discussed in the current chapter demonstrates that the serial clearly has had, and continues to have, entertaining as well as educational, and strategic potential. With this discussion I hope to lay a solid foundation for the understanding of the multiple ways in which THF contributed to, whether consciously or not, a strategy of national unity in Denmark. The simultaneous national reception of THF and the basic setup around an average Danish family provided the ideal conditions for this strategy. However, as I will show in the following chapter, there have been several other strategies for projecting national images on the air.

2.3. National Images on the Air

2.3.1. Introduction

For the past 10-15 years, there has been a surge of scholarship on different aspects of nationalism and national identity, particularly in relation to media, cultural heritage and memory studies. In a cultural context, this may be related to the experience of globalisation and the digitisation and dissemination of archival material taking place across the Western world. These processes can be perceived as threatening to our “imagined national communities”¹⁵⁴, and at the same time, we are all being presented with hitherto inaccessible traces of our national past, which invite us to re-evaluate our history. This may account for the considerable number of studies on the connection between national broadcasters and the formation of national identities. In the field of radio history there is a surplus of studies related to the BBC; Robertson (2008) comments on the “aural iconography” of Big Ben in the BBC’s Empire and Overseas Service from 1932-48, Seaton (2007)¹⁵⁵ takes a more general interest in the management of “Britishness” at the BBC; Hajkowski (2010) explores the BBC’s coverage of the monarchy and the empire from 1922-53 etc. However, other national broadcasters have also merited some attention: Finland (Salokangas, 2003 and Oinonen, 2004); France (Neulander, 2009) etc. Although some scholars have explored national identity in relation to Danish films (Linde-Laursen, 1999)¹⁵⁶ and (Agger, 2011)¹⁵⁷, there have been no seminal studies of the topic in connection to early Danish

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London and New York, 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Seaton, Jean: “The BBC and Metabolising Britishness: Critical Patriotism” in: *The Political Quarterly*, vol.78, 2007. Pp.72-85

¹⁵⁶ Linde-Laursen, Anders: “Taking the National Family to the Movies: Changing Frameworks for the Formation of Danish Identity, 1930-1990” in: *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 72, ed. 1, 1999. Pp. 18-33.

¹⁵⁷ Agger, Gunhild: “Danmarksfilm - kan danskhed oversættes?” (Denmark films - is Danishness translatable?) in: Ljung, Per E. (ed.): *Översättning. Adaption, interpretation, transformation, IASS, Universitetet i Lund 2011*, Centre for Scandinavian Studies Copenhagen-Lund, Lund, 2011. Pp. 181-93. Agger also published a substantial volume on the development of Danish television drama in 2005: Agger, Gunhild: *Dansk tv-drama. Arvesølv og underholdning*, Forlaget Samfundslitteratur, Frederiksberg C, 2005. In that connection she added a very thorough chapter on theories of national identity. However since it is mainly concerned with television drama as a genre and not with its potentially national strategies, I have chosen to focus on the article from 2011. For further exploration of images of Denmark in Danish

radio (the monopoly years). Neither is this the aim of the current thesis but, since I have selected a self-proclaimed portrait of the average Danish family as my case (THF)¹⁵⁸, it is an inevitable aspect, however invisible it might seem, of the approach I have chosen. To play on Billig's (1995) famous term, which I mentioned in chapter 2.2.4., THF is an example of "banal national identity" in its mundane and seemingly harmless portrait of the daily routines, dialogues, and thoughts of "the average Dane".

In the preceding chapters I have dealt with my close reading approach (2.1.) and issues surrounding my case (2.2.) in an attempt to specify the nature of and reasons for these choices. I have discussed the history of aesthetic and programme-focused approaches to radio as well as cited examples of close readings, and outlined the main discussions concerning the radio serial. However, the purpose of the current chapter is not quite so straightforward.

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.5. THF had the potential to become a powerful national image with the ability to create national unity. In my analysis of the reception of THF (chapter 5.4.) I will address the ubiquitous description of the series as a "reflection" of the average Danish family, an expression, which is equally frequent in descriptions of similar series and serials from other countries. If one looks closer at these international serials, they often exhibit similar traits across national differences.¹⁵⁹ In other words, what is being reflected in the family serials might be something other than the perceived character traits of a particular nation; it is also something more universally "western". This can be explained by dividing the reflection into two levels: The first level consists of universal clichés concerning the dynamics of marriage and family life, and the second level has more specific observations relating to the specific time and location in which the family serial takes place. This second level is also the main focus of my analysis, though elements from the first will undoubtedly appear as part of the storyline in THF. The term "re-proportioning", which I will introduce in chapter 6.1., in a sense

television series, see: Svendsen, Erik: "Det bli'r i familien. Om Stig og Peter Thorsboes tv-seriebilleder af Danmark" in: *Kritik*, No. 179, 2006. Pp. 75-87.

¹⁵⁸ Although it was not explicitly stated in connection to the series that it was a national image, it was referred to as such by former Programme Director Emil Holm (see chapter 5.5.) as well as in countless articles. Furthermore, "Hansen" is a very common last name in Denmark, akin to "Smith", which further underlines the average, and even national characters in the series.

¹⁵⁹ Again, this is mainly the case in Western countries.

accounts for this very process of embedding universal experiences in a specific national and historical context. Since this mechanism is at the centre of my study, the national aspects of the discussion will only be included insofar as they are relevant to re-proportioning.

For these reasons, the current chapter contains a discussion of studies, which consider the relation between national imagery and radio or film. Nevertheless, the focus here is neither on the images as such nor their “accuracy”, but rather the strategies employed in portraying the nation. This will serve as a backdrop to my discussion of THF as re-proportioning of current events in chapter 6.

2.3.2. Portraying a nation

Linde-Laursen (1999) makes some interesting observations in his study of two Danish films from the 1930s, which were created to capture the essence of Denmark and aimed at a national and international audience, respectively. First of all, Linde-Laursen makes the point that any national self-portrait will always be measured against what he terms “the generally accepted national narrative”. This concept is not specifically defined in his study, but he uses the contemporary reception of the films to extract some of the key elements to an acceptable national portrait or monument:

National monuments must allow multiple interpretations in order to let the whole people, regardless of differences such as age, gender, and class, subscribe to their materialization of the nation. Only through its ambiguousness is a national monument able to link all - or the overwhelming majority of - individuals with the imagined collective at a given time.¹⁶⁰

The key here is the “ambiguousness” which keeps the chosen image or form conveniently open to interpretation, and the same applies to a film with a monument-like status. Based on his two film examples, Linde-Laursen further identifies the need for clear reference points, such as the use of individual stories or moments from national history, with which the audience can identify. The absence of same was

¹⁶⁰ Op.cit. Linde-Laursen (1999), p. 19.

lamented in one of Linde-Laursen's cases, the modernist film *Denmark*¹⁶¹ (1935) made by architect and cultural critic Poul Henningsen. This mainly featured people as part of a panorama or a larger group¹⁶² and was almost devoid of historical references. In contrast, the other film, *The King Commanded* (1938), related the story of a pivotal moment in the development of Danish democracy in the late 1700s from the perspective of a single peasant named Jacob. While Henningsen's film was heavily criticised for its impersonal modernism, the other was praised by critics and audiences alike from the very beginning. However, as Linde-Laursen shows, the reception of Henningsen's film shifted considerably when it was re-released in a reconstructed version in 1962. At that point, the somewhat futuristic utopia originally perceived in the film had turned into a quaint image of the past since, as Linde-Laursen notes, many of its visions had been fulfilled in the meantime. The original ahistorical and future-oriented portrait of Denmark now showed the audience something recognisable, impressions of a country which they knew from their own lives and it consequently received rave reviews. This conclusion by Linde-Laursen also suggests that, once the film had turned into an historical relic, the close-ups of individuals were not crucial to the "identifiability" after all. By then the history of the film represented a piece of Danish history in itself. Even with the similarities between the two films there is one important difference worth stressing which influenced their aesthetic. While *The King Commanded* was aimed directly at a Danish audience, *Denmark* was intended for international distribution, and even premiered at the 1935 World's Fair in Brussels. According to Henningsen, this fact made it unwise to include any historical or internal references to Danish culture, a decision, which seems very central to the subsequent criticism. An example such as this then, reveals that there will probably always be a dual audience for any internationally targeted national image: the international audience and the nation portrayed. The same point was made by Agger (2011) in her article about the "Denmark film" as a genre.¹⁶³ She identified four main types of national films, the tourist and information film, the idea film, the historical Denmark film, and the documentary. Focusing mainly on the second type, the idea film, she also mentions Henningsen's

¹⁶¹ I shall return to this film briefly in chapter 4.1. and Poul Henningsen will be mentioned several times in his capacity as radio critic.

¹⁶² Op.cit. Linde-Laursen (1999), p. 24.

¹⁶³ Op.cit. Agger (2011), p. 183.

Denmark and highlights the idea that the common denominator of the many different elements in the film is the rhythm, referring to the (modern) rhythm of life in Denmark.¹⁶⁴ She makes an important point in saying that "It [the film] does not turn against the phenomena, it is presenting, but rather against those that have been omitted: more than anything the traditional tourist attractions and the national song treasure."¹⁶⁵ This means that the Denmark-critical tendencies seen in the film were in part caused by the exclusions of hitherto accepted sites of national pride - something that an international audience might not have noticed. According to Agger, Henningsen's work set the standard for many subsequent attempts at making "Denmark films" in a similarly "lovingly critical" manner - or, in the words of Seaton (2007), to whom I will return below: "Critical patriotism".

The notion of a national image meant for "international consumption" is also what Robertson (2008) explores in relation to the BBC and their projection of Britishness aimed at the dominions and the colonies 1932-48.¹⁶⁶ Her focus is not so much on British national identity as on what she terms its "aural iconography"¹⁶⁷, exemplified in particular by the chiming of Big Ben in London. According to contemporary surveys, Big Ben was quite popular with overseas listeners in the 1930s - somewhat curiously even to those who had never heard its bells in real life.¹⁶⁸ This example of the imagined nature of the national (or in this case, imperial) community is not uncommon. Robertson refers to Badenoch's (2005)¹⁶⁹ reference to the importance of church bells on German radio in connection to regional identity and in Denmark, the tolling of the town hall bells in Copenhagen have been used to mark *national* time since the beginning of the DBC in 1925.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Robertson highlights the interactive nature of BBC's Britishness, as a joint venture between the Corporation and its overseas listeners rather

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 184.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 185. Original version: "Den vender sig ikke mod de fænomener, den selv fremstiller, men mod dem, der er fravalgt: først og fremmest traditionelle turistattraktioner og den nationale sangskat."

¹⁶⁶ Op.cit. Robertson (2008), p. 459.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 461.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 463.

¹⁶⁹ Badenoch, Alexander: "Making Sunday What It Actually Should Be: Sunday Radio Programming and the Re-Invention of Tradition In Occupied Germany 1945-49" in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 25, ed. 4, October 2005. Pp. 577-598. Robertson refers to p. 587.

¹⁷⁰ The tradition was even carried into DBC television, where the town hall bells are still used for the countdown on New Year's Eve.

than simply being a matter of top-down decision-making.¹⁷¹ Like Linde-Laursen and several other scholars in the field have discovered, the image of Britishness (or of any other nationality) is subject to constant re-evaluation, forever adapting to the changing times. Hence, it developed along with the different target audiences during the waning of the Empire and the emergence of WWII: “If expatriates in the colonies had once been largely upper and middle class, their needs were now being challenged, if not overtaken, by ordinary working-class soldiers who demanded popular music and variety programmes.”¹⁷² With the new programmes, the image of Britishness changed. No longer middle class, the “high” cultural profile was replaced by a higher degree of approachability content-wise. This seems to suggest that the target audiences *was*, in a sense, the national image, that is until the target audience became tourists, although that period is only mentioned briefly by Robertson. A further consideration was the context of international politics, which shifted the image of Britishness away from the imperial and towards a softer image: “[...] the key was to “humanise” the “Englishman” for white audiences in the States and the Dominions in order to strengthen support for the war effort.”¹⁷³ It was in this vein that the BBC introduced the family serial *Front Line Family* in 1941, as mentioned earlier. After the war, Robertson concludes, the BBC slowly began to target the tourist with their image of Britishness, thus moving away from the idea of uniting the overseas audiences around Britain as their “home”.

Seaton (2007) continues where Robertson left off, discussing the crisis of the notion of Britishness after the dissolution of the empire, stating that “Indeed, more than ever, being “British” is voluntary not necessary.”¹⁷⁴ According to Seaton, what makes it almost obsolete are phenomena such as globalisation, multi-culturalism, and “a loss of historical memory and ways of remembering”¹⁷⁵ caused by the suppression of the imperial past. In view of these developments, how has the BBC contributed towards “metabolising Britishness”? Seaton observes:

¹⁷¹ Op.cit. Robertson (2008), pp. 460 and 463.

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 466.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Op.cit. Seaton (2007), p. 73.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 75.

The Corporation metabolises Britain (when it gets it right) by airing its virtues; by bestowing recognition to groups, issues, achievements and failures; by including the mad aunts and errant teenagers in the family group; by show-casing and polishing up the crown jewels of culture; by washing as much of the dirty linen as it can find right out there in the street and by taking the mickey out of the whole attempt.¹⁷⁶

This focus on airing differences and covering high and low culture alike is simultaneously more inclusive and, by definition, less distinctive than the examples referred to by Linde-Laursen and Robertson. Naturally, as Seaton is covering the BBC as a whole, there will be more aspects to the issue than in the other texts focusing on two particular films or only the Overseas Service. Yet, the strategy of trying to cover Britain as widely as possible in terms of countries, cultures, opinions, genders, ages etc. would probably be equally relevant with any other public service broadcaster. In Denmark this “inclusivity” is captured by the much-contested term from the Radio Act of 1926 “versatile” about the ideal broadcast content, which we shall see in chapter 4.3. There, the question was often whether the versatility was aimed at the cultural content, the different opinions, the single programme or the DBC as a whole. In Seaton’s version, it is the BBC as a whole, as a “corporation” which delivers this multitude of views. Returning to the discussion of national imagery, Seaton calls for “critical patriotism” as an approach, inspired by the English author George Orwell who, while seemingly remaining loyal to the idea of the “nation”, wrote several insightful essays on England, Englishness, and patriotism in the 1940s. This approach is not unlike what Henningsen achieved with *Denmark*, when he challenged the popular conception of what constituted a site of national pride. To him, the improvements of the modern era and the sight of industrious Danes were true to the times and illustrative of something truly Danish.

Scannell and Cardiff (1991) also mention the BBC’s challenges related to addressing the nation as a whole, especially one consisting of several countries. They make an important point about how broadcasting may not have been the actual instigator of a common national culture, but rather continued existing national trends and helped bring them to fruition. Even so, as mentioned above it is a continuous process which requires constant motion: “A sense of belonging, the “we-feeling” of the community, has to be continually engendered by opportunities for identification as the nation is being

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 78.

manufactured.”¹⁷⁷ Scannell and Cardiff’s approach is similar to that of Seaton, as they are trying to grasp the creation of that “we-feeling” from the perspective of large public events, royal celebrations and sports transmissions, in short the grand designs for a common culture. As the somewhat polemic title of their chapter indicates “*The National Culture*”¹⁷⁸ (my italics) is a complex phenomenon and myth at best, founded on the omission of any cultures or countries, which were not consistent with the simplified image of a united Britain.¹⁷⁹ By no means exclusive to the case of Britain, this strategy of inclusion and exclusion is central to any process of national image-creation, including the Danish one. According to popular belief, Denmark is an exceptionally homogenous society. Yet, the media, and broadcasting in particular, have been equally guilty of the middle-class, metropolis-centric view, as well as of the near-exclusion of the post-colonial parts of the Danish Kingdom (Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands) from its self-portrait¹⁸⁰. Hence, THF, which was referred to as “a reflection of the young families of our time”¹⁸¹ and “a portrait of the average Dane”¹⁸², were (lower) middle class, lived in Copenhagen, and there was scarcely a reference to any parts of the Danish Kingdom not situated in Denmark. Importantly though, THF does not belong to the category of larger national events that Scannell and Cardiff mention, but is rather a small-scale example of what they term the “calendrical role” of broadcasting: “Nothing so well illustrates the noiseless manner in which the BBC became perhaps *the* central agent of the national culture as its calendrical role; the cyclical reproduction, year in year out, of an orderly and regular progression of festivities, rituals and celebrations – major and minor, civil and sacred – that marked the unfolding of the broadcast year.”¹⁸³ As I will point out in chapter 6.2.3, THF managed to reflect the broadcast year within its own universe, complete with references to sports events, Christmas festivities, summer holidays, birthday rituals and so on.

¹⁷⁷ Op.cit. Scannell and Cardiff, p. 277.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., chapter 13, pp. 277-304.

¹⁷⁹ For one, there has been a tendency to conflate the term “British” with the term “English”. See Robertson (2008), p. 459 AND Scannell and Cardiff (1991), p. 292.

¹⁸⁰ Iceland gained status as an independent state in 1944, Greenland was a Danish county until gaining home rule in 1979, the Faroe Islands were also a Danish county but gained more independence in 1948, though still as a part of the Danish Kingdom alongside Greenland.

¹⁸¹ Quotation from former Programme Director of the DBC, Emil Holm in: Holm, Emil: *Erindringer og Tidsbilleder fra Midten af forrige Aarhundrede til vor Tid (Vol. 2)*, Det Berlinske Forlag, Copenhagen, 1939. Pp. 100-01.

¹⁸² Ref. to the cover of the 1944 book of THF-manuscripts. Op.cit. Locher (1944).

¹⁸³ Op.cit. Scannell and Cardiff (1991), p. 278.

Salokangas (2003)¹⁸⁴ and Oinonen (2004)¹⁸⁵ both examine Finnish public service radio (Yleisradio) together with its role in the ongoing process of forming national identities for Finland. Although he does not make any direct references to Scannell and Cardiff, the title of Salokangas' paper *The Egg and the Hen: Broadcasting and the Possibility of a Common National Culture* places him in the same discussion, albeit in a different national context. However, towards the end of the text, he admits to the difficulty of the national project: "In the era of one channel or fewer channels broadcasting did have real possibilities to be the constructor of common national culture – even though it is extremely doubtful that it ever totally succeeded in it."¹⁸⁶ Oinonen on the other hand, identifies three different interpretations of "Finnishness" in the popular series: *The Worker's Family* (Yleisradio, 1948-51), *The Adventures of Kalle-Kustaa Korkki* (Yleisradio, 1945-61), and *At the Kankkula Well* (Yleisradio, 1958-70). *The Worker's Family* as the title indicates, did not aim to depict all of Finland, but mainly the working class, supported by the political left. The strategy used for this portrayal was an historical emphasis on the first part of the 20th century, through which the central family lived in the series. In Oinonen's view, it was "an invitation to national identification"¹⁸⁷ but with a different view of Finnishness than the middle class image which otherwise dominated radio in the 1950s.¹⁸⁸ This opens up an interesting discussion of where the national image (or average) is placed historically, socially, or geographically. According to Scannell and Cardiff "[...] the predominant image of Englishness for most of this country has been of a timeless, rural way of life located in the southern parts of the country."¹⁸⁹ and as already mentioned above, Britishness was usually connected to England. Judging by THF, the image of "Danishness" or the "average Dane" in the 1930s and 40s was an urban lower-middle-class family, consisting of a husband working as an accountant, a housewife, and their two children. Interestingly, the Swedish equivalent,

¹⁸⁴ Salokangas, Raimi; "The Egg and the Hen: Broadcasting and the Possibility of a Common National Culture" in: Hovi-Wasastjerna, Päivi (ed.): *Media Culture Research Programme*, University of Art and Design Helsinki A 38, Helsinki, 2003. Pp. 65-83.

¹⁸⁵ Oinonen, Paavo: "It's a Long Way To Tippavaara", English summary of: *Pitkä Matka On Tippavaaraan... Suomalaisuuden tulkinta ja Yleisradion toimintaperiaatteet radiosarjoissa Työmiehen perhe, Kalle-Kustaa Korkin seikkailuja ja Kankkulan kaivolla 1945-64*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran, Tampere, 2004. Pp. 411-414. Sadly, as I do not understand Finnish, this summary as well as Salokangas' description are the only sources to Oinonen's work, I have been able to read.

¹⁸⁶ Op.cit. Salokangas (2003), p. 79.

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Salokangas (2003), p. 72.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 71.

¹⁸⁹ Op.cit. Scannell and Cardiff (1991), p. 289.

Ingenjör Björk med familj, comprised a middle-class family, the father an engineer, the mother a housewife, two children and a maid. Although there have been other attempts at portraying the nation in the shape of a family, these three examples of national self-understanding are even recognisable today, e.g. in the British debates surrounding the prohibition of fox hunting as a “quintessentially English sport” in the early 2000s, and the slight social/financial difference between the self-images of Denmark and Sweden (with Sweden being the more affluent of the two) still persisting in popular imagination.

Returning to Oinonen’s other two series, the second example is *The Adventures of Kalle-Kustaa Korkki*, the light entertainment tale of Kalle-Kustaa and Pekka, two Finnish “adventurers” working for an international oil company and travelling around the world. According to Oinonen, they “[.] displayed their national uniqueness by comparing the “normality” they represented with the ways of members of other ethnic groups, who failed to measure up to the Finns.”¹⁹⁰ This behaviour is likened to a strategy of an “us and others opposition”¹⁹¹, always defining Finnishness by that which it is not, a negative definition, if you will. The final example, *At the Kankkula Well* was a series about a man named Old Tippavaara, who had a thirst for alcohol and a tendency to question authorities. Set in a rural environment, it displayed a grotesque version of an old world, which was slowly penetrated by modernity: “Through laughter, the series prepared its listeners for a changing world, the rural origins of which is presented as an object of longing. The series constructed Finnish identity through *nostalgia*.”¹⁹² So according to Oinonen, these three strategies for depicting Finnishness are: building on a shared history, comparing with the non-Finnish, and expressing nostalgia for a disappearing world of the past. The same approaches have been used in other contexts, such as in the above mentioned Danish film *The King Commanded*, which relied on the construction of a shared (and proud) history for its national effect, and in THF, the character of the Mother-in-Law (M-i-l) and Mr Hansen (Å) both express deep nostalgia for “the old world”, when modernity was less advanced. Finally, there is a shining example of the “us and others” definition of Britishness in Hajkowski’s (2010) study, which deserves a separate note.

¹⁹⁰ Op.cit. Oinonen (2004), pp. 412-13.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p. 413.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 414.

Hajkowski, among other things¹⁹³, investigates the BBC's use of the monarchy and the empire as important ambassadors of British national identity 1922-53. In that context he comments on some compelling radio narratives based on the lives of the real men who were central to the upkeep of the empire. Gordon of Khartoum was one such man, and the depiction of him in the eponymous radio programme from 1935 as a quintessentially British hero is dependent on the above-mentioned "us and others" strategy. Judging from Hajkowski's description, Gordon is positioned against three different versions of otherness. One group consists of the local Sudanese, who admire him for his heroism, and who are the objects of Gordon's affection. However, according to Hajkowski there is no doubt about the hierarchy between the two:

[...] Gordon represents the physical embodiment of the imperial ideal of the 1930s. Gordon's empire is characterized by progress and paternal affection; the British rule in the interests of their subjects. Yet the program maintains a strict racial division between white and black, superior and inferior, civilized and barbaric. The white Gordon brings justice and order to chaotic Africa, defending those who cannot defend themselves.¹⁹⁴

In this case the otherness is not negative, but merely inferior beyond a doubt, and the indigenous people represent an important occasion for emphasising Gordon's benevolence, a general feeling of colonial "duty", which Rudyard Kipling described as "The White Man's Burden" in his poem from 1899. The second version of otherness is surprisingly to be found among Gordon's own people, namely his superior William Gladstone (four-time UK Prime Minister between 1868 and 1894) who, according to Hajkowski, did not measure up to the pro-imperial ideal that the radio programme wished to project. "Gordon represents steadfastness and acceptance of Britain's responsibility to the colonies; the anti-imperial Gladstone represents vacillation and weakness."¹⁹⁵ Here it is a *political* otherness that is displayed. The third and final version of otherness is seen in the Mahdist soldiers, who are eventually responsible for Gordon's murder. Hajkowski notes that Gordon's status as an imperial martyr is underlined in the manuscripts by his *white* garments and the description of his *white*

¹⁹³ The second half of Hajkowski's book is dedicated to the BBC's regional coverage, which Hajkowski (p. 9) believes shows another and more inclusive side of the BBC than the one described by Scannell and Cardiff (1991) AND Briggs (1961-91). In that sense Hajkowski agrees with the multifarious aims of the BBC as described by Seaton.

¹⁹⁴ Op.cit. Hajkowski (2010), p. 37.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

head being severed from his body, while the soldiers are characterised by “dark faces and bright spears”.¹⁹⁶ This kind of otherness is a classic depiction of an evil-minded enemy, which only serves to confirm the Mahdis’ inferior status. What all of these strategies share is their support for the image of heroic British imperialism as an ideal version of Britishness. While these programmes are described as a conscious attempt to project Britishness, Neulander (2009) presents a kind of reversal of the idea in her study of French radio in the 1930s. During that period, France was in the unusual position of having both public and private broadcasters simultaneously, which forced even the public broadcaster to compete for the audience’s attention. Therefore, there was much attention given to imagining the audience and their preferences which usually expressed itself as a catering to the family in terms of cultural content and advertising. Instead of “broadcasting national identity”, Neulander terms it “programming national identity”, and declares that: “This programming was no accurate reflection of interwar society. [...] It was, instead, a gauge of listener desires for themselves and that society – or perhaps, even more on point, a reflection of the imagined audience designed by those who made the programs.”¹⁹⁷ Moreover, Neulander concludes that the image projected of the French people consisted of “imagined traditional families”¹⁹⁸ - while more diverse images existed in other cultural outlets in the same period. However, as will already be clear by now, this strategy of reflecting *imagined* audiences is hardly an unusual practice, especially in Denmark where listener surveys were few and far between for the first several decades of DBC broadcasting. Finally, I would venture that even with extensive audience research there would still be a degree of “imagination” to any national images projected on the radio, since the idea of the “nation” is an exercise in imagination in itself. This is also what Scannell (1996) is referring to, although with a more positive term, when he talks of the “care-structures” of broadcasting, which I referred to in chapter 1.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 39.

¹⁹⁷ Op.cit. Neulander (2009), p. 186.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 3.

2.3.3. Conclusion

Although the preceding pages may have given this impression, the projection of national images is not always a matter of conscious strategy. It is radio in itself, which, especially in the first years before the advent of television, presented the unique opportunity of gathering and portraying the idea of the nation on the first simultaneously distributed and consumed medium. There is no doubt that this opportunity was explored and exploited by many, but I have chosen to discuss only the different *approaches* to the assignment, the strategies for projecting a nation on the air (or on film) – rather than the results. It should be clear by now that the projection and the audience are often two sides of the same coin - that is, as Neulander discovered, broadcasters have been eager to forecast the interests of their listeners and to reflect their lives - and in that sense have met them with an imagined portrait. Again, this is what I have termed the descriptive/predictive strategy in relation to serials. In other cases, as was seen in relation to imperial broadcasting, it was a matter of showing examples of otherness to underline a more normative “essence” of Britishness. However, the argument for using ambiguous national imagery as a strategy of inclusivity in terms of class, gender, age, background etc, was put forth by Linde-Laursen as well as by Robertson’s example of the “aural iconography” of Big Ben; this showed that even sounds without a direct experiential connection could resonate with listeners of all kinds. Finally, while Neulander found the national projection to be a conservative top-down construct, Seaton and Robertson identified a more interactive and dynamic negotiation between the BBC and their listeners.

Public service broadcasting is in its essence a nationalist venture, a point, which is often expressed by the inclusion of “Danish”, “Norwegian”, “Swedish” etc. in the names of the broadcasting corporations. Furthermore, in a Danish context, the formative years of the DBC took place under a Social Democratic government, which had clear designs for the use of radio in building a sense of national cohesion as well as in establishing international connections. To return to THF as an example of the projection of national identity, merely the act of stating that requires a subscription to the notion of the “nation”. This is important to keep in mind whenever entering into these discussions. However, if I *were* to identify the approach to national imagery in THF, I would call it an

example of ambiguity. With its universal characters and frequently unclear conclusions on issues that could have merited a more direct statement, it keeps itself open to interpretation by presenting several different views on a subject and not pointing to one position as “the truth”. However, the repetitive narrative structure, which keeps the serial universe and its characters from developing, undeniably favours a conservative outlook. In my content analysis in chapter 6, I will re-address this tendency in THF. However, before I can embark on the analysis, it is necessary to present my research material (chapter 3) and to cover the context surrounding THF (chapter 4).

3. Research Material

In the following three chapters I will briefly describe my research material to give an impression of the empirical part of my process in terms of the condition and accessibility of the material, as well as my own practical methodology.¹⁹⁹ Chapter 3.1. (*Introducing: The Hansen Family*) is a general presentation of THF, including different aspects relating to the content and remediations of the series. Chapter 3.2. (*Archives and Research Material*) provides an introduction to the main analogue archive collections used as well as points to material for further exploration for those interested in early Danish radio history. Furthermore, it contains details about my approach to the THF manuscripts and to the organisation of the vast amount of scattered THF-information gathered from radio schedules, reviews, handwritten notes in archival material, etc. Finally chapter 3.3. (*References and Translations*) presents further thoughts and choices concerning my practical usage of the material in the thesis.

¹⁹⁹ This chapter only covers my work with the “primary” THF-material. For details about the press clippings used in the reception analysis, see chapter 5.4.

3.1. Introducing: *The Hansen Family*

The following is a general introduction to *The Hansen Family* with all of the basic information about the series²⁰⁰, its main characters, general content, genre, and the remediations created during and after its run. In order to provide a full overview of the THF phenomenon, I have chosen to present both the material I am including in this thesis (the THF recordings and manuscripts) and the categories, which I only refer to briefly here and there throughout (mainly the remediations).

Short description

The Hansen Family was a weekly radio drama series broadcast on Danish national radio (DBC) between 2 April 1929 and 1 October 1949, amounting to 914 episodes.²⁰¹ Each episode was approximately 15 mins long and the general broadcasting time was between 7pm and 10pm, generally on Sundays.²⁰² The series revolves around the lives of an “ordinary” Danish family called the Hansens, living in Copenhagen. The main characters are the husband, Aage Hansen (Å), a 33 year old accountant²⁰³, Gerda Hansen (G), his 26 year old stay-at-home wife, their twins²⁰⁴ Little Aage (LÅ) and Little Gerda

²⁰⁰ See “Genre” below for an explanation of this term.

²⁰¹ As will be mentioned in chapter 3.2. “914” refers to the number of broadcast dates (BD) noted in the DBC Archives.

²⁰² I have mainly studied radio schedules from the years 1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49, and judging from them it was not until *after* 1929 and possibly later that THF was allotted the Sunday evening slot. Still it is commonly said to have been “broadcast every Sunday evening for 20 years” (e.g. on the back cover of the 1944 THF book and countless other places) and even the elderly people I have talked to remember it as a Sunday phenomenon. For an intriguing exploration of the different conventions of and uses for Sunday radio programming in a German postwar context, see Badenoch (2005).

²⁰³ The ages mentioned here are the ones often written in the early programme guides, though it is not quite clear whether Å & G age apace with their children as their ages are rarely ever mentioned.

²⁰⁴ The Hansen couple’s first son (later named Peter) is already mentioned in the second episode, April 1929, but he is only ever present in the background and was eventually forgotten by Locher and replaced by the twins. The twins however, arriving in the mid 1930s (some sources refer to 1935 as their year of birth (Agger (2005))), while they are part of a manuscript from 14.01.1934 (date from SRL - the DBC states 15.01.1934). They became popular and rather open-mouthed characters on the show in the late 1930s, to the delight of many listeners, who enjoyed a break from the marital quarrels of the Hansens. However, the rate at which they age is as unclear as the rest of the characters - apparently even to Ellen Røvsing (G), who claimed in an interview from 1939 that their precise age was not known to anyone, but was supposedly around 7-8. Source: “En lykkelig Fru Hansen fylder 50!” in: *Ekstrabladet*, 09.06.1939. A listener also remarked that the third son (4th child), born in 1946, came rather soon considering the fact that G’s pregnancy had only been announced some five months earlier. Source: Letter from a reader/listener (by “Bert. B”) in: *Nationaltidende*, 28.01.1946.

(LG) and the “Mother-in-law” (M-i-l) whose actual name is hardly ever used. As mentioned in chapter 2.3.3., the name “Hansen” is and was very common in Denmark, and according to the former Director-General of the DBC it even entered popular speech as a term for “the average Dane” after the introduction of the series.²⁰⁵

All of the episodes were written by the same author, journalist, and comedy playwright Jens Locher.²⁰⁶ The actors playing the part of Å (Aage Schmidt) and G (Ellen Røvsing) were also the same for 20 years with very few exceptions. The series ended when Aage Schmidt died in September 1949.

Characters

Gerda

[...] please be so kind as to let us keep “Gerda”, I for one am completely smitten with her and only wish that every wife could laugh as heartily at her husband’s silliness.²⁰⁷

At the beginning of the series, G is a 26-year-old housewife, married to Å. She has one sister, Ellen, and both of her parents appear in the early episodes. Her father Duelund is a strict military man and her mother (the Mother-in-law) is a housewife. While the father passes away after a few episodes, the M-i-l remains an important sidekick to the Hansens until 1945, when Olivia Norrie, the actress who portrayed her died. G is the social democrat and mildly cultural-radical modernist in the household, always attracted to new trends²⁰⁸ in music, arts, and nutrition. Thereby she often becomes the agent of progress and change with her fixed ideas²⁰⁹, which she introduces not

²⁰⁵ See chapter 5.5. for the Holm quotation.

²⁰⁶ For further information on Locher see chapter 4.4.

²⁰⁷ Letter from a reader/listener letter by “Georg Westh.” In: *Bornholms Tidende*?? (illegible title on original clipping), 30.05.1939. Original version: “[...] vil De bare være saa venlig at lade os beholde “Gerda”, jeg er i al Fald helt forelsket i hende, og vilde ønske at alle Koner kunde le saa hjertelig ad Mandens Dumheder.”

²⁰⁸ See chapter 6.2.4. for a more thorough treatment of this aspect of “trends” in relation to G’s character. The same affinity between G and the changing fashions is reflected in the illustrations of her as a character in the THF drawings and comic strips. The selection of images shown later in the current chapter shows that while Å remains the same visually throughout, G is depicted in the style of the gamine flapper in 1929 and a Doris Day-like housewife in the 1940s, thus reflecting the changing ideals of femininity.

²⁰⁹ This character trait is also shared by her Swedish equivalent Mrs Björck from the series *Ingenjör Björck med family*. She is described as “the central figure in the welfare project” (“välfärdsprojektets centralgestalt”). Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 77.

necessarily for her own gain, but for the benefit of the whole family. Å on the other hand usually introduces fixed ideas only in order to serve his own objectives. However, as he remarks in one episode²¹⁰, G is but a hesitant modernist, who does not always follow through on her fascination. According to Locher in an article from 1929,²¹¹ as a woman, G embodied the new times and so was given the upper hand on many occasions, usually seeing through Å's schemes and being on top of the situation. However she has her moments of weakness, falling prey to snobbism, gossip, and her dreams of a better and more glamorous life. In those moments Å is always there to gently show her the error of her ways. G's openness towards change also applies to their children and she uses modern practices of child rearing that contrast the corporal punishment she and Å grew up with. She usually gives her children the benefit of the doubt in cases where Å jumps to conclusions about their guilt. Physically, she is often described (and depicted) as attractive, slender, and takes a professional rather than sensory interest in food and cooking. To her, meals are the fruit of hard labour and economic planning, while Å sees them as the magic rituals around which his days are orchestrated. As a housewife G is aware of and takes pride in her duties and tries her utmost to make ends meet on Å's humble salary. As a woman she is not completely satisfied with merely being a housewife and sometimes complains about the tedium of everyday life, instead wanting to return to work. In several episodes she is often good-humoured and commonsensical, when faced with Å's occasional tipsiness and her sister's constant gossip about the adulterous ways of the male sex. It is particularly in these situations that G made herself endearing to many (male) listeners.

Aage

[...] for a number of years he [actor Aage Schmidt] has made the character into something the numerous Hansens, not to mention Sørensens, Jensens and Kronborgs, of Denmark will not be ashamed of identifying with. [...] He created a character that combined many Danish qualities - good and bad - in a way that nobody found exaggerated.²¹²

²¹⁰ Untitled episode. 16.11.1929.

²¹¹ Locher, Jens: "Familien Hansen" in: *Radiolytteren*, 21.09.1929.

²¹² "Aage Schmidt død i Gaar" in: *Berlingske Tidende*, 12.09.1949. Original version: "[...] han har gennem en Aarrække gjort Rollen saadan, at Danmarks utallige Hansen'er, og for den Sags Skyld baade Sørensen'er, Jensen'er og Kronborg'er med, ikke vil skamme sig for at være identisk med ham. [...] han skabte en Karakter, der samlede mange danske Egenskaber - baade gode og lastværdige - i sig paa en Maade, saa ingen fandt det overdrevent."

Å is a 33-year-old bookkeeper, who works in an office in the city and is very conscientious about his job. Not particularly ambitious of nature he is usually content with laying low and yet is disappointed when being bypassed for a promotion. As such he embodies the new class of white-collar workers that started booming in the 1930s as a result of the advanced industrialisation, which created a need for an administrative workforce, especially in larger cities. His most characteristic features are his conservatism, his reclining chair, and his immense love for food. The latter is clearly illustrated by his rather rotund figure described on the radio as well as depicted in the comic strips. Often his "culinary" obsession makes him condescend to lowly schemes and childish lies in order to secure himself even more food, making him an embodiment of the era of scarcity in the 1930s and 1940s, in spite of his well fed appearance. Scarcity only seems to increase his obsession, while his homely appearance lends him the air of a man of influence. Å's worldview is influenced by his higher degree of interaction with it than G who is mostly confined to the home, and so Å is interested in international politics and economy, though without being particularly well versed in any of the subjects. However he has a superior command of the Danish language and enjoys writing speeches, making puns, and commenting on the language skills of his children. He has a tendency towards acting pompous, superior and sexist, but G usually reveals the flaws in his arguments and deflates his ego. As concerns Å's conservatism, it perfectly balances G's open-mindedness, as he is the arbiter of historical consciousness in the relationship, while G steams forward. That way he is the gentle modifier of progress, who makes sure that the middle way is always followed.

Physically, Å & G represent the classic Western couple consisting of the slender, healthy wife and the well-fed patriarch, whose idiosyncrasies are shrugged off with equal parts good humour and sharp wit on G's part. Compared to today's standards, the foundation of their relationship may be hard to understand, as their union is mainly explained by their dialectic rather than with a romantic history. Although there are moments of romance, their relationship is primarily based on cooperation and production, making sure that their family thrives and contributes to society as a whole. They are happy together, but they are only so, because they consider their constant battles, what Björck

(2010) terms "the gender polarity"²¹³, an inevitable part of marriage. In today's fiction they might have been depicted as divorcees, whose affection for each other and their twins must compete with their identity crises and professional ambitions in a world where the nuclear family no longer represents the civil obligation to society that it once did.

The Mother-in-Law

The mere fact that the M-i-l is never really given a name reveals a lot about the dramaturgical function of the character. On the one hand, it suggests that the series is told from Å's point of view, alongside the fact that G's family is vastly overrepresented compared to Å's relatives who usually show up only in scattered episodes, none of them acting as coherent characters. The M-i-l acts as a peace-disturber²¹⁴ who often literally barges into the Hansen home, banging the doors and arriving in a state of excitement, which she spreads to the peaceful home. Even though the Hansens agree that she is a nuisance, she actually shares many character traits with Å. She is self-serving in matters of money as well as of food and she also bemoans the onslaught of the modern times, sometimes even with the sympathy of Locher on her side, it seems.²¹⁵ A trait, which she does not share with Å, is her suspicion towards authorities and even her own family members, as well as a vindictive protectionism when it comes to her daughters. Her often absurd demands and conceptions of the world are also deliverers of much comedic effect and her character was very popular with the listeners. Together with G's sister Ellen, she represents the extremes that G steers clear of because of her common sense.

Sister Ellen and Brother-in-Law Ebbe

G's sister and her husband are approx. the same age as the Hansens, and serve mainly as their negative counterexample with their many displays of mutual distrust and scheming. Interestingly, when the episodes that featured the M-i-l were re-aired after the death of Norrie, all of the M-i-l's lines were given to Ellen. This reveals that the two

²¹³ Op.cit. Björck (2010), pp. 52-61. Original version: "Genuspolariteten".

²¹⁴ See chapter 6.2.4.

²¹⁵ See chapter 6.2.2.

characters have similar functions in the series, spreading doubt and testing the marriage of Å & G on a regular basis.

The twins Litte Aage and Little Gerda

Born in the mid 1930s, both of the twins are very clever and quick-witted, sometimes even outwitting their parents. Whenever they appear in an episode, they bring a different dynamic to the dialogue, influencing it with their own childish logic and expressions. Being children, they can challenge all of the notions of the grown-ups without any serious repercussions to them or to the light-hearted comedy of THF. This seems to be at the core of their popularity with the listeners, and probably also of the choice to introduce them to the series in the first place. Their names are almost meta-reflections on their characters as direct reproductions of their parents. In a sense, they bring an historical timeline to the circular THF-universe, at once representing the new generation with their use of slang and innocent petulance, as well as giving the listeners an impression of Å & G when they were young.

Content

The episodes were often constructed around the dialogue between the spouses. A typical situation opened on Å's return from work, when the different experiences and expectations of husband and wife collide. The series covered universal as well as more current themes such as gender roles, marriage, and child rearing on one hand and financial difficulties, unemployment, modernity, and the latest trends on the other. Much of the action is contained within the four walls of the THF home in Copenhagen but there are also quite a few examples of episodes taking place in the countryside, on the street, on the stairs etc. The style is light comedy with an abundance of punchlines and linguistic witticism alongside moments of popular philosophical reflection. The language is straightforward with special attention to everyday turn of phrase, sociolects, and dialects, a quality, which was often highlighted in the reception.²¹⁶ The time of the narrative usually coincides with the broadcast, not clock-wise, but date-wise and with reference to recent real life events. There are only a few examples of

²¹⁶ See chapter 4.4. about Locher's talent for linguistic observation.

overarching storylines²¹⁷, and they usually end after a few episodes or are spread out inconsistently across a couple of months. Although the characters have a memory of past events, they do not develop or change in any significant way, even when faced with obvious signs of the changing times. Thus they represent universal characteristics rather than psychological entities, which is consistent with the external point of view resembling an eavesdropping situation.

Genre

Before discussing the genre(s) of THF, it is necessary to consider its serial “category”. Hilmes (2007) provides a distinction between serials and series based on the opposition between American and British serial formats. According to her, the American serial was characterised by 15-minute episodes in a serial with a “continuous, virtually endless” lifespan, while the British serial fiction that appeared in the 1930s usually had “an end always clearly in sight.”²¹⁸ This, however, does not take the internal relation between the episodes into account, which is why I have chosen the more detailed description by Hagedorn (1995) to determine the category of THF:

[...] series, unlike serials, do not establish temporal continuity between episodes. [...] series produce no notion of succession or causality from one episode to the next, nor any sense of process, development, or growth. For the series, there is at most some “basic story concept” or situation, which is broad enough to allow for the creation of a large number of adventures, but these actions or situations bear no consequences for later episodes. [...] Episodes of a serial, however, are like interlocked links in a chain - missing even one, risks the integrity of the whole.²¹⁹

Granted, the Hansen couple has twins in 1935 as mentioned before, but there are also times when each episode seems to start afresh - a repetitive impression which the recycling of manuscripts over the years serves to enhance even further. With this generally episodic nature and near absence of clear developments, as well as the recognisable “basic story concept” of the Hansens and their family life in Copenhagen, THF most resembles a “series” in Hagedorn’s definition and that is the term I have

²¹⁷ One such example is found between April and September 1934, when the Hansens start looking for a new apartment, move in and spend several episodes getting used to its modern amenities.

²¹⁸ Op.cit. Hilmes (2007), p. 12.

²¹⁹ Op.cit. Hagedorn (1995), pp. 41-42.

chosen to use throughout. When referring to serialised fiction in one form or the other on a more general level, I am using the term “serial(s)”.

That THF was a new phenomenon in its time can be sensed in the confusion surrounding the labeling of the series. In the manuscripts, in the reception, as well as in internal DBC documents it is referred to as either “modern dialogues”, “light comedic situations”²²⁰/ sitcoms, “sketch series”, and “radio-humoresques”. Another label that springs to mind is “soap”, due to THF’s mainly domestic setting and its parallel existence in printed serial fiction.²²¹ Locher used THF as “the weekly one-act-piece” in ladies’ magazines while it was still on the radio. Another reason the soap label seems close at hand, is because of the commercial implications; “soap” or “soap opera” refer to the products advertised in the earliest of its kind on American radio when many of them were written in close collaboration with advertisers.²²² Even though there were no commercials on the DBC, Locher allowed THF to appear in all sorts of advertisements as well as possibly taking commissions from the state to cover particular topics.²²³ One important difference from the soap genre though, is the imagined audience. Whereas soaps usually target women through *daily, daytime* scheduling²²⁴, THF was often placed between light concerts and lectures in the Sunday evening entertainment slot, which was essentially family time and only once a week. Even in the days when it was broadcast later at night, there were references to how children welcomed the opportunity to stay up longer with their parents, thus turning it into a family ritual. Another important difference from the soap genre is the content. While soaps are usually characterised by sentimental plots and a favouring of the female perspective, THF was a show about a married couple, where both spouses had equal amounts of airtime and psychological insight and inner monologues were rare at best.²²⁵ Fink

²²⁰ The Danish term used is “lystspilsituationer”. According to Gyldendals Teaterleksikon, “lystspil” is derived from the German “Lustspiel” which was widely used in the 19th century. In Danish films and theatre it refers to the lighter comedy variety, which emphasises entertainment value and well wrought plots over more in-depth character drawings. This aspect is further underlined by the addition of “situations” which not only refers to the episodic or single “situation” character of the storylines, but also links it to situational comedy in general.

²²¹ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 19.

²²² Ibid. p. 38.

²²³ See chapters 6.1. and 6.2.2.

²²⁴ Op.cit. Hilmes (2007), p. 12. AND Hendy (2003), p. 4.

²²⁵ The exception may be the few episodes where Å or G is home alone, but the nature of the monologue then often resembles mumbling to oneself rather than a portrayal of inner stream of consciousness. In

(1981)²²⁶ describes a set of radio comedy types as “variety series”, which encompasses “the situation comedy” and “the vaudeville/burlesque comedy”. With its regular cast and self-enclosed episodes without much development from one to the other, THF most resembles the situation comedy. It does, however, have traces of what Fink calls “the husband-wife team comedy” with the collision between two character types bringing the comedy. Moreover THF in a few instances veers into the absurd,²²⁷ which is a trait that Fink connects to the vaudeville tradition.

With all of these similarities in content and style, as well as the fixed-point scheduling, the commercial uses, the recycling of material across different media platforms and the never-ending storyline, THF clearly leaned towards the American tradition. Furthermore, while the DBC often looked to the BBC as well as to Swedish and German radio for inspiration, the DBC was the pioneer in the case of THF. By the time Swedish national radio debuted their own serial *Ingenjör Björck med familj* (1936-43), the BBC introduced their first serial family comedy *The Plums* (1937-?)²²⁸, and German shows appeared after WWII, THF had been on the air for several years.

Remediations

Originally I had planned on including an analysis of the different remediations of THF. As the project has progressed, however, it has proved necessary to focus mainly on the radio programmes and their manuscripts in order to go into depth with the particular circumstances related to the radio medium. Still, it is worth mentioning the innumerable other ways THF was re-imagined in order to give the full impression of it as an “institution” in its time. As will also be mentioned in chapter 4.4., Locher seems to have been a skilled businessman with a special talent for spreading the THF brand. In the DBC archives there is a filmed advertisement for the cinema starring the real cast in character, promoting the toothpaste *Perletand*. Other commercial uses include comic strips for the gastric tablet *Samarin*, floor lacquer, and a preservative for cooking called

another project it would be interesting to explore whether there are tendencies of psychological insight in THF, but that is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

²²⁶ The following distinctions by Fink are from his sub-chapter *Variety series*, Fink (1981), pp. 197-203.

²²⁷ In a rare THF-episode, G takes to massaging Å's back with a rolling pin and some margarine, while he is lying topless on their dining room table, essentially making parallels between his large corpus and a lump of dough. (*Massage*, 09.03.1949).

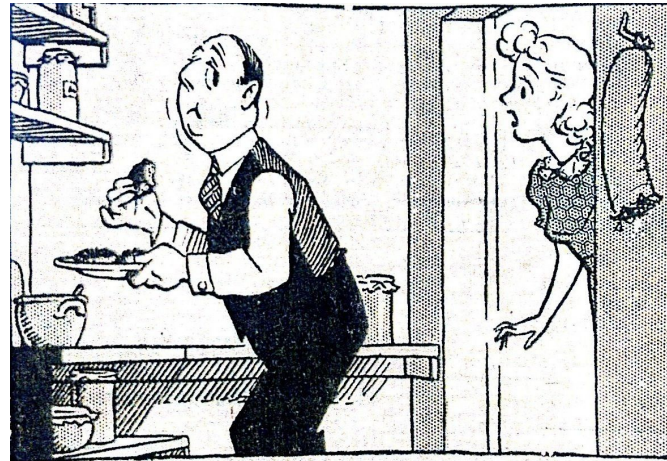
²²⁸ Op.cit. Hendy (2003), p. 4.

Atamon. Meanwhile, American serials were experiencing their “Golden Age” and being created around the same product categories (personal care, household articles), which usually targeted women in daytime programming. Unsurprisingly though, there is no evidence of direct targeting in connection to THF, which was, after all, a product of a public service institution. Furthermore, there was a regular Hansen family comic strip in the magazine *Landet* in the mid 1940s (see illustrations below) and manuscripts printed for public consumption in books and magazines. There have been several attempts at transferring THF to the TV screen and to other broadcasters. When the DBC launched their television service in the early 1951, they turned to the massive success of THF in the hope of attracting viewers. It amounted to nine episodes²²⁹ and the German TV-station ARD also tried their luck with a screen adaptation of THF in 1966-67. Another interesting fact is that the Danish pirate radio station *Radio Mercur* (1958-62) had a series of weekly comedy “situations”, inspired by THF, featuring actors Ghita Nørby and Henrik Wiehe.²³⁰



²²⁹ Op.cit. Agger (2005), p. 169.

²³⁰ Op.cit. Nørgaard (2003), p. 105.



— Hugger du af Frikadellerne! Og du, der er syg i Maven og ikke taaler at spise Kød!



Illustration from *The Radio Listener*, 1929 (previous page), comic cover & illustration from *Landet*, 1943-46 (top & bottom)

As mentioned in chapter 2.2., this kind of use has long been the destiny of the serial format at the rise of a new medium. Hagedorn (1995) pointed out that when radio started, serials were imported from magazines, where they had been known to secure steady readership and the same happened at the transition to TV.²³¹ It is worth noticing though that the THF radio series never quite had the same success in any other medium. This may indicate that there was either a certain radiogenic quality to the basic setup of THF, maybe the times had outgrown the format, or the characters were too closely connected to the original actors. The DBC did not have another successful family serial

²³¹ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 19.

on the radio until 1967, when *Karlsens Kvarter* (1967-84) made its debut with more political bite, witty dialogue and a larger degree of openness towards the many changes taking place in the real world. I will return to this series briefly in chapter 4.5.

3.2. Archives and Research Material

Used sources – abbreviations

The Royal Library (RL)

Radiolytteren, accessed at RL (RaL)

Scripts from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DBC)

The White Programmes, accessed via larm.fm (WP)

Cards with Broadcast Dates from the DBC (BD)

Institutional documents at Rigsarkivet

Apart from what may still be found at the DBC archives, the majority of surviving institutional documents from the DBC are available at Rigsarkivet (The State Archive) in Copenhagen. However, most of the material (esp. from my research period 1925-50) is in need of thorough cataloguing, an assignment which, once completed, could open up a world of new possibilities for radio scholars in Denmark. Until then, finding relevant material is time-consuming at best. In Rigsarkivet the collections are been archived under the “archive creator”, which can be anything from the whole corporation (the DBC) to a single department or person. This makes multiple searches and orders necessary and for each new archive creator one must apply for a new permit to access the files. For instance, in my research period, the archive creators “Statsradiofonien”, “F.E. Jensen”, “Danmarks Radio”, and “Radiorådet” contain the bulk of historically relevant material. For important minutes and staff records it might prove fruitful to order material from archive creator “Radiorådet” and the collection named “Journalsager 1927-1980”. For details on censorship and radio during the occupation, there are personal notes of Managing Director F.E. Jensen archived in his name. Sadly, the whole “Journalsager”-collection is in the unusual predicament of lacking the customary “journal” to guide the archivist and scholar through its 214 boxes.

Considering these rather complicated procedures and my focus on the content of the programmes rather than on institutional history, I chose to spend the little time I had on some other, more well-described boxes from the archives. I ordered two boxes²³² of “Mikrofonprøver” (microphone tests) and 13 boxes of “Programmer til censur 1944-1945” (programmes for censorship 1944-45) by archive creator “Danmarks Radio”, which were the only ones apart from the above-mentioned “Journalsager” that seemed potentially relevant to THF. Nevertheless, neither of the boxed categories proved of interest, as none of the actors involved with THF were mentioned in the microphone tests and the material on censorship only pertained to music programmes.

Sound recordings (THF and other)

Of the 914 THF-episodes listed in BD²³³, only one fragment and three full episodes (one of which is an amateur performance) have survived as sound recordings. All of these have been digitised as part of the LARM project and made available on the LARM-platform.²³⁴ Most of the other recordings from the history of the DBC used for the present thesis have been accessed through and collected in a separate folder on the platform. For material from the history of American broadcasting, I am indebted to the readily available material on archive.org. Returning to the THF recordings, below is a commented list of what remains:

1934 (?): Fragment, poor quality: *No title* (about tickets to a stage production of *Orpheus*).²³⁵ The year refers to the premiere of the episode, though the surviving recording may be from a later production. This is the only recording featuring the customary tolling of the town hall bells in Copenhagen and the intro-speak.

²³² There is a max. of 15 boxes at a time, when ordering material for the reading rooms.

²³³ See chapter 3.2.

²³⁴ See larm.fm. LARM (2010-13) is an infrastructure project created to make auditory cultural heritage available for research and education purposes. LARM is funded by the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (FIVU) and the current thesis is one of several academic cases aimed at testing the digital platform (larm.fm) developed for sound recordings.

²³⁵ Untitled sound fragment, 28.01.1934 (my dating - no date on original). Link to the LARM Archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=ca47843b-1637-2242-8a61-18da3fad7f66>

1935/42: Full episode, poor quality: *Natlig Helt/Far er jo hos dig* (Nocturnal Hero/Daddy's Here With You).²³⁶ The dates and titles refer to the (possibly) original broadcast and the rerun with a different title.

1949: Full episode, good quality: *Lediggang/Penge er roden til alt ondt* (Idleness/Money is the Source of all Evil).²³⁷ This is the last episode recorded before the actor playing Mr Hansen (Aage Schmidt) died and the serial was taken off the air. The broadcast of the episode originally opened with an introduction by Jens Locher, but this part no longer exists.

1940s/50s: Full episode, good quality: *Ægteskabets illusioner* (Marital Illusions)²³⁸: The voices on the recording do not belong to the usual cast, and the reading of the lines suggest that it is an amateur performance. The date and precise origins are unknown. It came from a private collection which was donated to the DBC archives. The fact that the manuscript for this episode was published in Locher (1944) date it around late 1940s-50s. The episode originally debuted in 1939.

Although the early episodes were broadcast live, there is evidence that some episodes might have been broadcast from wax recordings in the late 1930s²³⁹, and some of them preserved on records during the German occupation²⁴⁰, possibly for censorship purposes as there are also mentions of "control tapes". When magnetic tapes were slowly introduced at the DBC towards the end of the 1940s, THF seems to have followed suit.²⁴¹ Furthermore, in an article from 1949²⁴², it is mentioned that the very last episode was recorded on steel wire.

²³⁶ *Natlig Helt/Far er jo hos dig* (Nocturnal Hero/Daddy's Here With You), 21.06.1942 (broadcast date). Link to the LARM Archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=93e0a306-94fa-2a4e-bdab-98244c221952>

²³⁷ *Lediggang/Penge er roden til alt ondt* (Idleness/Money is the Source of all Evil) 01.10.1949 (broadcast date). Link to the LARM Archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=d905f37b-2ec8-2648-8842-eba7496cf146>

²³⁸ *Ægteskabets Illusioner* (Marital Illusions), date unknown but probably after 1944. Link to the LARM Archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=a3879cc1-c6b4-0d4c-8dab-b2cf7f5e5021>

²³⁹ In the WP from July/August 1939, the word "Wax" appears in connection to THF.

²⁴⁰ DBC-manuscripts between December 1943 and March 1944 have the word "skæring" (groove-making/recording) in handwriting on the front page.

²⁴¹ The first mention of "magn. opt." (probably short for magnetic recording), I have come across was on a DBC-manuscript from February 1949 and they frequently reappear after that.

THF-manuscripts

It is possible to access the manuscripts for THF in three different ways, depending on the amount of time available and the level of detail needed. I have made use of all three possibilities listed below:

1) *Published selections of manuscripts meant for the general public.* According to different sources there were four books from 1930, 31, 32 and 44, of which I have been able to find two second-hand. The version from 1944 is also available through the Danish public library system and all of them are at RL for off site reading, i.e. borrowing.

2) *RL, reading room access only (free of charge).*²⁴³ Large collection of what is mostly "writer's editions" of original manuscripts, though with noteworthy absences (from 1929 there are only 4 of the 27 eps. mentioned in BD), approx 13-14 eps. missing from 1934, and no manuscripts from 1947-49. Collected in hardback volumes with a few exceptions.

3) *DBC, archive access only (surcharge applies):* Large, almost complete collection of "production edition" manuscripts with hand written notes. Some times several versions of the same episode - from each actor, the director etc. Sorted in piles after years and kept as single manuscripts (=unbound).

Reading the manuscripts

My work with the manuscripts has been distributed over three major rounds with several returns for retrieving single episodes. Because of the costs connected to working in the DBC archive, I chose to work with the collection at RL as much as possible.

The purpose of the first major round was to get a general impression of the THF corpus; the themes, the genre, the style etc. At this point the subject of national identity was

²⁴² "Familien Hansen stryges i aften" in: *Ekstrabladet*, 12.09.1949.

²⁴³ When I was working with them, they still had to be ordered by special request, but in the summer of 2013 RL started making these volumes individually accessible in the general search system REX.

very central to my thesis and so I took particular interest in any sections that might address this issue. To this end I developed a colour coding system in my notes (see below) in order to mark sections of interest to my initial open questions concerning national identity in regards to morale, geography, language etc. Then, as the national aspect of my thesis was reduced considerably, the application of the colour codes changed character. During this round I had not yet narrowed down my search to a specific period, so I browsed through large parts of the corpus and read the episodes that seemed interesting.

A year later I took my second major round with the THF material at RL, filling in the gaps at the DBC. At this point I had decided on the complete episodes from every fifth year of the production starting with the first year and ending with the last: 1929, 34, 39, 44 and 49. Amounting to more than 200 episodes this represents about 22% of the THF corpus and, together with a few further episodes from other years that proved important along the way, it makes out a both large and representative sample. Another concern was the fact that I wanted to include the first and last years of the production as well as at least one year during WWII to see which, if any, changes were made to the serial during the German occupation of Denmark 1940-45. Finally, selecting full years made it possible to see whether there were cases of continuity or larger story lines, which a shorter or a random selection would not necessarily have revealed. During the reading, the existing colour codes were expanded to include observations concerning food, gender, and sound production.

The third and last round was focused on single episodes chosen for their representative quality in regards to the re-proportioning categories I developed after the second round (see chapter 6.2.). This reading was thematic and focused on structural similarities rather than continuities.

Cross-referencing THF data

Considering the sporadic and, in the case of the earlier years, disorganised collection of manuscripts at (RL) it has been difficult to confirm the amount and frequency of the actual output of *The Hansen Family*. The term "output" is to be understood in two ways:

On the one hand it refers to the amount of manuscripts written and on the other, the amount of manuscripts turned into a broadcast by the DBC. Therefore I have tried a method of "triangulation" between several sources (RaL, RL, WP and BD), in order to determine the level of accuracy of my sources for future use. A pilot test performed on the registrations for the year 1934 revealed that, with a few exceptions, the information in WP and BD (and other sources) was reasonably identical (see table below). As both sources are from the same archives (DBC), this result may not be that surprising. On two separate occasions though, THF was the subject of a short radio feature on the DBC, in which two different numbers for the total amount of episodes were given. One was from the series *Danmark kort*,²⁴⁴ where the number was 964 and the other from around 2000²⁴⁵ (the 75-year anniversary of the DBC is mentioned) counts 903 episodes. The origins of these numbers remain unclear, but they obviously did not use BD or WP. BD lists 914 episodes and if we are to trust the pilot performed on 1934, so would WP. Therefore, this is the number I have chosen to use.

Key to symbols in pilot test (see next page):

+ = the broadcast date in the "Date" column corresponds with information in the different sources (WP, BD, RaL, RL) in the horizontal line

+? = uncertain whether the date and the source match for different reasons

Date (e.g. 20/5) = the date according to the source

% = Date not mentioned in the source

²⁴⁴ Broadcast on the DBC, P1, 15.04.2009

²⁴⁵ Title, channel, and broadcast date unknown.

Pilot test <i>The Hansen Family-episodes from 1934</i>										
Date	WP	BD	RaL	RL		Date	WP	BD	RaL	RL
7/1	+	+	+	+		13/5	+	+	+	+
15/1	+	+	+	+		22/5	+	+	20/5	+
21/1	+	+	+	+		29/5	+ ?	+	+	27/5
28/1	+	+	+	+		19/8	+	+	+	+
6/2	+	+	+	+		26/8	+	+	+	+
12/2	+	+	+	+		2/9	+	+	+	+
18/2	+	+	+	+		9/9	+	+		
27/2	+	+	+	+		16/9	+	+		
4/3	+	+	+	+		26/9	+	+		
12/3	+	11/3	%	%		1/10	+	+		
19/3	+	+	+	+		15/10	+	+		
25/3	+	+	+	+		21/10	+ ?	?	%	?
2/4	+	+	+	+		5/11	+	+		
8/4	+	+	+	+		19/11	+	+		
15/4	+	+	+	+		27/11	%	+ ?	% ?	+
23/4	%	+	+ ?	+ ?		2/12	+	+		
29/4	+	+	+	+		11/12	+	+		
6/5	+	+	+	+		16/12	+	+		
						23/12	+	+		

For my purpose, particularly BD and WP serve to fill in the gaps between the loose information gathered from other sources. A full OCR-digitisation of RaL would further

improve the navigation in the early radio landscape but until that has been approved, the other sources will have to do. Based on the experience gathered from the 1934 pilot test, I have chosen to use a combination of WP and BD as the main registry for THF. Each of the years I selected for general orientative reading as mentioned above (1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49) have been entered into a spreadsheet constructed around the information from WP and BD. This means that all other information has been measured up against the collected dates from WP & BD. Further below is an excerpt from the full spreadsheet.

Colour codes (used in Word-notes)

Although I looked into the possibility, I did not manage to acquire the authorisation to digitise the THF material at RL (or the RaL as mentioned earlier) during my Ph.D. period. Since the material has hardly ever been requested at RL and it originates from the DBC, there is still hesitation regarding the handling of the material and uncertainty as to who has the copyrights at this stage. Hence, the main part of the readings were done on site with notes on the laptop. That is why I chose to colour code the sixty pages of notes in order to make it easier to navigate them, once I reached the analysis stage. Since some of these codes cover rather broad areas, they have only been used in cases of special interest instead of in every single observation corresponding with the colour. These are the collected codes from all three readings of THF:

Grey: Topical references to the times, living conditions, morals etc.

Green: Episodes of particular interest (e.g. mentioned in review, recording available, traces of continuity).

Yellow: Geographical references or episodes taking place away from the apartment, character typology (e.g. “the artist”)

Red: Stage notes about sound or other signs of media awareness in the manuscripts.

Blue: Linguistic colourings, humour, sociolect etc.

Pink: Sudden changes in the power relations/dialogue

Dark green: References to food

Dark blue: Gender roles

Theme-columns in the THF-spreadsheet

1) **Source:** In which the abbreviations above have been used to verify where the given manuscript is kept - if an episode is missing on a date "determined" by one of the three main sources (WP, BD and RL), they have been marked with the abbr. for the source with the absence, preceded by an % (%RL). In the case of dates differing from the one in the column "WP/BD date", they have been marked by the source abbr. followed by the "new"/differing date.

2) **Year:** Year of presumed first broadcast

3) **Epis:** Refers to the episode no., sometimes handwritten on the RL manuscripts, sometimes absent.

4) **WP/BD date:** When the broadcast dates of the single episodes as written in WP and BD coincide and thereby confirm each other, they are written here for cross-referencing.

5) **Sign. DBC:** Refers to the signatures or initials often written on the front page of the manuscripts at the DBC. => Suggests which people might have been part of the approval process of the single manuscripts and, during WWII, the censorship process.

6) **Rerun:** Date of rerun (usually in the 1940s), handwritten on the RL or DBC manuscripts.

7) **Day:** The day of the week in which the episode was broadcast/scheduled (follow the date from column 4). => Shows development in scheduling and possible affiliations with other programmes - en bloc. Information usually retrieved from RaL and WP.

8) **Time:** Broadcast times written along with the weekday, usually from RaL and WP.

9) **Characters:** Characters appearing in the episode, as mentioned in either RL, WP or RaL. Overview of how much airtime the individual characters are given and which kinds

of extras are used (family members/colleagues/friends/acquaintances?) => family series or scenes from a marriage?

10) **Content/themes/title:** Indication of content in the episodes => quick overview over a period and its thematic preoccupations.

11) **"Enakter":** A phenomenon often referred to in handwriting in RL. Probably a one-act THF piece printed in the tabloid BT under the name of "Ugens Enakter" since 1928.

12) **Comics:** Another remediation of THF referred to in handwriting in RL, probably the comics that were printed in *Landet*.

13) **Book:** One book from 1944 (Westermann) with seven manuscripts accompanied by each their illustration, but also scattered references to the 1930, 31, and 32 edition of THF manuscripts printed for the public. Whenever the year is specified in the source, it is written into the spreadsheet.

14) **"Sengetid":** Refers to "Familien Hansen Ved Sengetid", uncertain whether it was a text/comic strip or sound version of THF, but it is often mentioned in handwriting in RL.

15) **Miscellaneous programme info:** For any surplus of info found in RL, WP (often on extra info sheets), RaL.

16) **Progr. before/after:** This category contains information on what kind of programme came before and after THF, gathered from either RaL or WP. The information in the spreadsheet has been abbreviated or summed up from the programmes and thus has the potential to mislead in cases of close reading of the info. However, when keeping the larger picture in mind, it provides a useful overview of the radio-schedule and reception-context in which it was broadcast (BD/WP) or, was meant to have been broadcast (RaL). Even though I do not differentiate between the two, it still provides useful information about whether it was part of an entertainment block or a more educational connection. Generally THF seems to have formed the transition between lighter concert music and a more "serious" lecture.

Excerpt from the THF-spreadsheet

Source	Year	Epis	WP / BD Date	Sign. DBC	Rerun	Day	Time	Characters	Content/themes/title
WP/Pol/DBC %RL	1929	1	4/2/29	(none)		Tue	20:45	(Debut) (Å&G)	Å after a party - walking home drunk
WP/Pol/RL/DBC		2	9/4/29	(none)		Tue	21-21:10	(Å&G)	Little Aage/son Peter stealing - inherited vice from G?
WP/RL/%DBC		3	8/5/29	(not avail.)		Wed	21:45	(Å&G)	Jealousy after dinner party
WP/RL/DBC		4	2/6/29 - ?	(not avail.)		Sun	21:30	(Å&G)	Å says no to his boss/DBC: Å's chair and slippers - G pricks him with needle
WP/RL/DBC		5	21/6/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?		Fri	21:15	(Å, G, Ellen, father Duelund)	Engagement & reverse psychology/DBC: About Å and Kaptajn Jespersen
WP/RL?/DBC		6	29/6/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?		Sat	21:15	(Å&G)	Repeat of #2? Speech for the M-I-L's birthday/G calculates her worth
WP/%RL/DBC		7	8/8/29	OB	1930?	Thur	21:15	(Å&G)	G envious of Å's job, does not want to accept his money
WP/%RL/DBC		8	14/8/29	(none)		Wed	21:00	(Å&G)	They want a divorce, divide their furniture but end up staying married
WP/%RL/DBC		9	20/8/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?	1930?	Tue	20:45	(Å&G)	About annoying family members and a possible inheritance
WP/%RL/DBC		10	27/8/29	Instruktion	1930?	Tue	21:15	(Å&G)	Hypochondria and acting
WP/%RL/DBC		11	3/9/29	Instruktion	1930?	Tue	21:00	(Å&G)	Å&G win the lottery, discuss how to spend it, realise they have not won
WP/%RL/DBC		12	9/9/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?	1930?	Mon	21:00	(Å&G, constable Møller)	Å boring, police drops by, Å has not cheated with his bookkeeping
WP/%RL/DBC		13	17/9/29	(not avail.)	1930?	Tue	20:00	(Å&G, and waiter)	Smørrebrød, jazz, character types, snobbism
WP/%RL/%DBC		14	23/9/29	(not avail.)		Mon	20:00	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/%DBC		15	5/10/29	(not avail.)		Sat	20:15	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/%DBC		16	8/10/29	(not avail.)		Tue	20:20	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/%DBC		17	14/10/29	(not avail.)		Mon	20:15	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/%DBC		18	23/10/29	(not avail.)		Wed	20:15	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/DBC 25/10		19	28/10/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?		Mon	20:30	(Å&G + son Peter)	About child rearing - slap in the behind or comfort?
WP/%RL/DBC		20	9/11/29	(not avail.)	1930?	Sat	?	(Å&G)	Å's boss Henriksen gets a new wife
WP/%RL/DBC		21	16/11/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?		Sat	20:15	(Å&G + Miss Madsen)	G back in the office, Miss Madsen employed to take care of their home
WP/%RL/DBC		22	17/11/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?	1930?	Sun	20:55	(Å&G)	G returns from work while Å has been at home all day
WP/%RL/DBC		23	26/11/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?	1930?	Tue	21:00	(Å&G)	Continued from #22: Miss Madsen starts discussion after dinner
WP/%RL/DBC		24	4/12/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?	1930?	Wed	21:00	(Å&G)	G home late from work, Å asks if her boss is interested in her
WP/%RL/DBC		25	10/12/29	Instr/J.N./S.W?		Tue	21:00	(Å&G + Miss Madsen)	Å makes Miss Madsen quit by coming on to her
WP/%RL/%DBC		26	15/12/29	(not avail.)		Sun	21:00	(Å&G)	?
WP/%RL/DBC		27	23/12/29	Instruktion		Mon	21:00	(Å&G) not in RaL	Christmas Eve, Å&G preparing the ornaments for the tree
?		28?	?	(not avail.)		?	?		
DBC		29	?	(23/12)		?	?	(Å&G)	The tax form
EPISODES TOTAL		27/28							

Media sources in general

Towards the end, I wish to add an important caveat concerning the historical media sources I have used. In projects such as the present one which requires spending a lot of time in physical archives, one is particularly dependent on more immediate access to other less central sources throughout the writing process. For that reason, the radical newspaper *Politiken* may seem over-exposed among my sources due to the online availability of their historical archives (to subscribers). However, I have also relied quite a bit on the magazine *Radiolytteren* (1925-54), by the conservative publisher *Berlingske* for gaining a general impression of Danish radio (listener) culture 1925-50. Furthermore, many of the articles by and about Locher used here are from outlets related to *Berlingske*, possibly due to Locher's strong professional connection from working on some of their publications as we shall see in chapter 4.4. Therefore, this end of the political publishing spectrum is also represented in the present thesis.

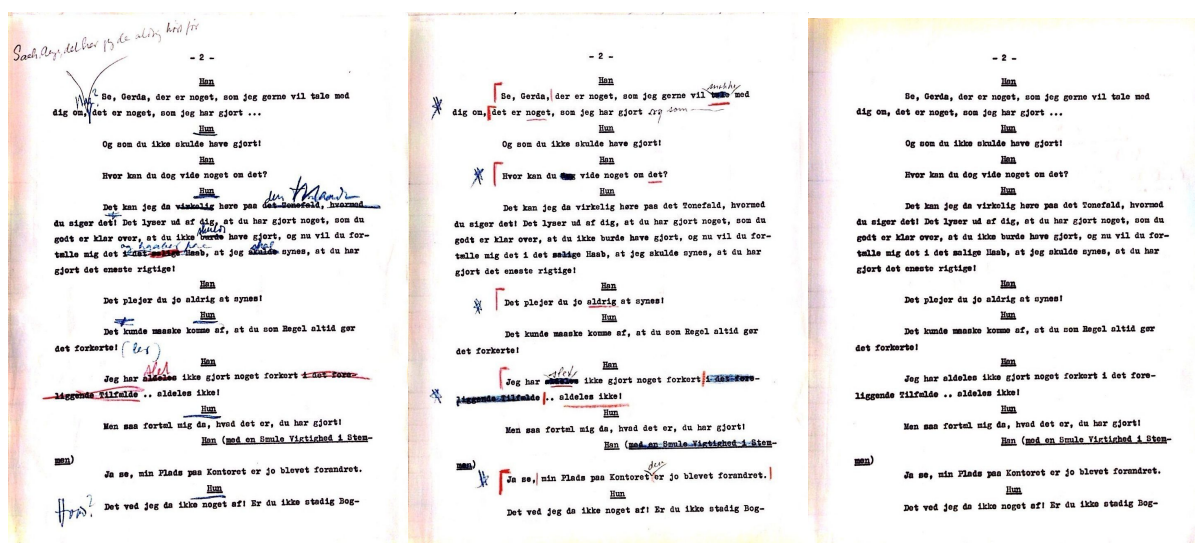
3.3. References and Translations

References

Regarding my method for referencing THF manuscripts in my thesis, I have chosen to use the date written on the cover of the manuscripts, sometimes in hand sometimes typed. However, it has not been possible to check whether these dates refer to the day of rehearsal/recording or to the broadcast dates. Hardly any of the printed radio schedules contain information about the particular episode as they mainly state the name of the series, the actors, the author, and that it is a comedy series - but not the title of the single episode. Therefore I cannot say for certain whether the date and the particular episode title match every time. Furthermore, in the later years it is not uncommon that there is one day's difference between the date on the cover of a manuscript and the date cross-referenced from WP and BD. This corresponds with information from Knud Schrøder, the Sound Director of THF, who mentions the rehearsals as usually taking place the day before the broadcast.²⁴⁶ In the cases where I have had several manuscript-versions of the same episode available (mainly at the

²⁴⁶ See also chapter 5.1. for more details about the sound production and Schrøder's work.

DBC), I have chosen to read and quote from the version belonging to the Sound Director (where available) as it is generally the one with the least alterations scribbled by hand (often there are no changes to the actual text but only a note saying “door bell” or “glass”), and it is therefore safer to assume that it is closer to Locher’s original version. Furthermore, the alterations in the individual actors manuscripts differ from one another, thereby multiplying the text and complicating the analysis (see an example below). This would be a very interesting object of study if I were focusing on the process of adaptation of Locher’s script or more intently on the reception aspect, instead of on the original version and its transformation of current events into fictional form. Furthermore I have far too little aural evidence of THF to ascertain which of the alterations were actually used for the final broadcast. I will return to this discussion of text versus sound in chapter 5.2.



Manuscript versions of *Afdelingschef* (Head of Department) 05.03.1949. From left to right: Gerda, Aage, and the sound director.

Translations

Whenever I have quoted from the manuscripts, I have translated the Danish original into English to keep the overall flow of the thesis intact. The same applies to the few foreign-language texts I reference in other connections. With all translations I have provided the original version in the footnotes, as I am aware of the dangers involved with translating material. There will always be a risk of making self-affirming

translations that tend towards confirming my analytical conclusions, and as such my effort to translate is as much a part of my analysis as the analytical text itself. This is also true of the contextual information compiled in chapter 4, which, as we shall see shortly, all form an important part of my analytical process.

4. The Context

Before embarking on my analysis of THF as re-proportioning (chapter 6), it is necessary to become better acquainted with the particular national, historical, and institutional contexts in which THF came into being. Therefore I have provided a brief history of Denmark 1925-50 as well as an introduction to eight central DBC programmes from the same period, and a discussion of public service broadcasting at the DBC. Furthermore, I have added a short biography of the author of THF, Jens Locher, in order to give an impression of his general contribution to Danish culture and his approach to the assignment at the DBC. Finally I will highlight other similar family series from the international arena. In chapter 5 this contextual view of THF will be complemented with five sub-chapters devoted to the general features of THF.

4.1. Crisis, War and Improved Welfare. Denmark 1925-50²⁴⁷

Introduction

The following is a brief introduction to Danish history in the years 1925-50. In order to remain focused on THF and the themes it raises, I have deemed it necessary to be very selective about this task. I have not gone into detail with the artistic developments of

²⁴⁷ This chapter is primarily based on Hansen, Lars P. and Thomsen, Bente: *Overblik, Danmarkshistorie i korte træk, tidslinjer til overblikket*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2010. AND Kaarsted, Tage: *Danmarkshistorie, vol. 13*, Gyldendal og Politiken, Copenhagen, 2004 AND Schroeder, Peter: *Det 20. århundredes Danmarkshistorie*, Forlaget Columbus, Copenhagen, 2007.

the period and I have focused much more on the cultural movement “the cultural radicals” than on the social democratic or conservative perspectives, since the radicals were a dominant group in the period and represented a stark contrast to the “conservative” outlook of THF. I have also chosen to focus more on politics than on culture during WWII as I wanted to paint the broader national picture that forms the distant background of THF episodes in those years. Generally, this chapter confirms that Locher took great pains to include as many current events and trends in the THF universe as possible. Hence, we will see the below themes recurring throughout the rest of chapters 4, 5, and the close readings in chapter 6.

1925-40:

Social democratic improvements

Danish politics in 1925-50 were dominated by the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was in government, alone and in different coalitions throughout the whole period, except from 1926-29 and 1945-47, when the Liberals²⁴⁸ took office. Their first time in government was secured in the 1924 elections bringing them 37% of the votes and experiencing steady growth until their popularity peaked in 1935 with 46%. This dominance was in part due to the strong leader of the Social Democratic Party, Thorvald Stauning, but it was also an expression of the SDP’s ability to handle the considerable crises sweeping over Denmark at the time. The party focused on improving the living conditions of the growing working class by letting the state control the national economy and introducing social reforms. In 1933 the SDP signed the so-called “Kanslergade Agreement” along with the Liberals and the Social Liberals²⁴⁹ as a drastic solution to the ramifications of the Depression, which had left 38% of the workforce unemployed in 1932.²⁵⁰ The agreement made lockouts and strikes illegal for one year, while subsidies to the construction industry and agriculture boosted the economy. At the same time the government signed the Social Reform introduced by minister K. K.

²⁴⁸ Even though the party is liberal, its Danish name is “Venstre”, meaning “left”. In order to avoid confusion, I have chosen the word “liberal” instead.

²⁴⁹ Again, the Danish name “Det Radikale Venstre” is confusing as it means “the radical left” without belonging on the left side of the political spectrum. Therefore I am using “social liberal” instead.

²⁵⁰ Op.cit. Kaarsted (2004), p. 76.

Steinke, which included free medical care, support for the disabled and the elderly as well as an increase in unemployment benefits.

Culture: Debates and consumption

Amidst these changes, which gathered all social groups under what would later become the welfare state, there were cultural debates on unity and nationalism. In 1935, Henningsen, the ardent THF critic, released *Denmark*, which I mentioned in relation to Linde-Laursen (1999) in chapter 2.3. The modernist portrait of contemporary Denmark was a mixture of jazz tunes, abundant footage from factories and provocative cross-cutting between images of heads of state and beer bottles on an assembly line, all of which shocked many people, who did not want to recognise his image of Denmark. Another addition to the debate was the book *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (A fugitive crosses his tracks) by Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose, published in Norwegian in 1933 and translated into Danish in 1938. It was a chilling account of the barren mentality seeping through the small community of Jante. The mentality is summed up by the narrator Espen in the “Jante Law”, a grim equivalent to the Ten Commandments. The Jante approach to life is dominated by an internalised law, according to which no one should ever strive to rise above anyone else, least of all oneself. This kind of self-imposed and -enforced mediocrity was seen as a criticism of Danish mentality, and survives to this day in debates about Danish national identity. THF also displayed some of the characteristics connected to the Jante Law, especially the tendency to discourage new initiatives.

There was also a larger battle raging concerning the culture of the working classes. The so-called “cultural radicals”²⁵¹, of which Henningsen was one of the most prolific and outspoken representatives, was a radical movement in the 1930s, originating in the thoughts of critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927). Brandes introduced the “modern breakthrough” in Denmark in the late 1800s, but the breakthrough of the cultural radical movement did not occur until the 1930s. It favoured modernist forms of

²⁵¹ The term “cultural radical” was not used at the time, but was allegedly introduced by Professor of Literature Elias Bredsdorff (1912-2002) in 1956 and has since become a staple in the Danish vocabulary.

expression, and challenged institutions such as the Church, the pedagogy of the old school system, and the traditional gender roles enforced by the (petty) bourgeoisie. The institutions' tendency to limit the thoughts and development of the individual was a cause for concern to the cultural radicals, who wanted the lower classes to think for themselves (while few cultural radicals were even from the working class). Therefore they believed in a freer approach to sexuality and in the social responsibility of the arts in provoking debates, lest the public fall prey to conformist beliefs. Many of these thoughts placed cultural radicals on the watch list of the National Socialists a few years later, when Germany occupied Denmark during WWII. Interestingly, some of the people associated with the movement, such as H. C. Branner, Kjeld Abell, and Henningsen, reappear in different parts of the THF context, but always as opposites to Jens Locher. For one, in spite of its comedic treatment of modern society and the nuclear family, THF was still affirmative of the institution of marriage.

Many of these radical cultural critics leaned towards communism. They were even criticised for ignoring the atrocities of the Communist regime, but they did not take lightly to fascism - even before the worst atrocities had been committed. The cultural radicals were among the first to criticise what they considered very worrying tendencies after the National Socialist Party had come into power in Germany in 1933. Even though there were groups of extremists to the left and right, neither the Danish Communist Party (DKP) nor the National Socialist party (DNSAP) had much political influence in Denmark in the second quarter of the 20th century. Furthermore the marches of the DNSAP were mostly ridiculed by the public and after a few violent encounters between the two parties, it became illegal for any members of political parties to wear uniforms in public.²⁵² In 1941, Denmark signed the Anti-Comintern Pact under severe German and internal pressure, in order to fight communism. This caused the first public demonstrations against the government during the occupation.

Even in the face of unemployment and the Depression, or exactly because of them, the entertainment industry offered plenty of distractions for the masses. In the 1930s alone, 75 Danish movies were made, of which 2/3 were either light comedies or farces.

²⁵² Op.cit. Schroeder (2007), p. 84.

Furthermore, the glamorous dancing movies from Hollywood stirred the public imagination and toy vendors sold miniature Ginger Rogers dolls as Christmas gifts in 1937.²⁵³ The excitement surrounding exercise extended to outdoor activities, with a focus on regular exercise in the spare time made possible by the Vacation Act of 1937.²⁵⁴ This was supported further by the establishment of public gymnasiums and swimming pools, as well as hiking societies, rowing clubs and a new beach called Bellevue, which was made relatively close to Copenhagen in 1932.²⁵⁵ As we shall see in chapter 4.2. this new movement was also reflected in the radio schedules of the DBC.

In architecture, functionalism or “funkis” quickly became an influential style after having been introduced to Denmark by architect Arne Jacobsen around 1930.²⁵⁶ It allowed people with a regular income to live in efficient homes with the latest amenities - just like the Hansens did in THF after their move in 1934. Modernism also flourished in the arts, with authors such as Tom Kristensen (1893-1974) and Knud Sønderby (1909-66) providing insights into the disillusionment with bourgeois existence and the more socially engaged Hans Kirk (1898-1962) and Martin Andersen Nexø (1869-1954), who sided with the proletariat. At the other end of the spectrum was the literary exception Karen Blixen (1885-1962), who wrote in a “fantastic” style, drawing on *Arabian Nights* and often depicting the Denmark and Central Europe of the previous centuries. Interestingly, she held a series of radio causeries in the 1950s, which made her peculiarly popular, in spite of leading a reclusive existence as “Baroness Blixen” north of Copenhagen.

²⁵³ This is mentioned by a toy vendor interviewed about his Christmas preparations in a radio feature from 1937 called *Hvor Julen allerede er forberedt* (Where Christmas has already been prepared for). 13.11.1937. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=879c8021-f818-47db-9c44-7f97a9863fc8>

²⁵⁴ Op.cit. Kaarsted (2004), p. 111.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 113. A few years after the beach was opened, Å & G visited it in the episode *Fællesfølelsen* (The Community Feeling, 19.08.1934), where Å complained about the impropriety of people undressing in tents with very little distance in between. Naturally, G enjoyed the healthy connotations of slender bodies moving about naturally under the sun.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 56.

Women's issues

Returning to the discussions about sexuality and marriage, the late 1920s and 1930s were a time of many debates on women's rights with a few improvements to their position in society. In 1915, women and servants were given the vote and in the following years the Women's Movement dedicated their efforts to securing equal wages and the right to continue working after being married - without being fired when becoming pregnant. Most working class women continued working even after marriage, but in the lower middle classes it was still customary for women to work in retail or administration mainly in order to find a husband. Even if they wanted to stay in the work force, their housekeeping and nursing duties remained the same at home, making it all but impossible for them to retain both. In 1923 author Thit Jensen (1876-1957) toured the country with her controversial lectures on "Voluntary Motherhood", after having seen her own mother suffer from the consequences of 12 childbirths. Meanwhile, doctor and sexual educator J.H. Leunbach (1884-1955), opened many short-lived sex clinics offering advice on birth control to the masses and Leunbach and Jensen ended working together. Leunbach was sentenced to three months' jail in 1936 for performing illegal abortions, and being a prominent man with radical views, he had to flee to Sweden in the last years of the German occupation. While there was an increased awareness of birth control in the 1930s²⁵⁷, abortion was not legalized in Denmark until 1973.

World War II and the postwar years

After Denmark was occupied by Germany on April 9, 1940, a new unity government comprised of the Social Democrats, the Liberals, the Conservative Party, and the Social Liberals was formed. Knowing the Danish army was inferior to the German army, they quickly decided on a collaborationist approach to the occupational forces, expecting some leniency in return. In a sense it was a continuation of the policy of neutrality first introduced after Denmark suffered a fatal defeat against Prussia and Austria in 1864, a strategy, which was reconfirmed during WWI. Although it has since been questioned

²⁵⁷ Richard, Anne Birgitte: *Kvinder i mellemtiden 1930-55*, Dansk lærerforening/Skov, Varde, 1983. P. 11.

whether Denmark could have resisted more, as did Norway, the decision allowed the Danes considerable “freedom” in comparison to the Norwegians. Although international travel was limited, Danes could go on hiking trips around Denmark or use their “kolonihave”, a tiny plot of land where the working class could afford to grow their own vegetables close to the city.²⁵⁸

Norway on the other hand was under full occupation from 1940-45, even being forced to relinquish their radio sets to the authorities. In Denmark, the airwaves were left open and the citizens were allowed access to radio in order to make propaganda broadcasts possible, though there were still threats of revoking the privilege if the Danes did not comply.²⁵⁹ At that time, radio sets were present in close to every home, making radio practically accessible to everyone. During the first couple of years there were many heated discussions between the Managing Director F.E. Jensen and the censors, but he did manage to avoid airing some of the most propagandist German programmes with reference to the Radio Act.²⁶⁰ On a more general level, many basic necessities such as gas and sugar were rationed during the war, continuing until 1952, and the deterioration of diet and hygiene resulted in a decline in public health and lice outbreaks. The State Housekeeping Council launched programmes on the radio to encourage thrifty behavior as a civic duty and teach ways of keeping the whole family nourished even under the most pressing circumstances.

In 1942, popular Prime Minister Stauning passed away, and his successor Vilhelm Buhl was soon instated only to be replaced by the more cooperative Erik Scavenius. In the 1943 general election, the public more or less reconfirmed their support for the unity government, and they stayed in charge until voluntarily resigning in 1945. It was a reaction to a German ultimatum, and since the Danish King did not accept their

²⁵⁸ Originally meant as a way of encouraging the lower classes to become self-supplying and benefit from the change of scenery, the concept was first introduced in the late 1800s. The amount of kolonihaver increased steadily during the first half of the 20th century, and people started building little cots on the plots, turning them into something similar to summerhouses. In THF, the Hansens buy a kolonihave in 1934, a development, which delivered plenty of new storylines involving gardening and neighbourly quarrels.

²⁵⁹ Op.cit. Christiansen (1950), p. 410.

²⁶⁰ For a detailed source to the internal state of affairs at the DBC during the German occupation, see Christiansen, Ernst: “Radioen i krigens og besættelsens tid” in: DBC25. Pp. 163-294. However, it is a rather biased account, written by a radio employee eager to defend the actions taken during the war. Furthermore, the text was originally published in 1945, without the benefit of historical perspective.

resignation, the government was officially, but not practically, still in office. The German representative in Denmark, Dr. Werner Best, declared the country in a state of emergency and the country was now under complete German control. In the same period, the Danish resistance started organising and increasing their efforts, bombing sites of strategic value to the occupational forces as well as encouraging the illegal press. They even cooperated with a group called *Det kæmpende Danmarks Radio studie* (Radio Studio of the Fighting Denmark), who were alerted in advance, when an attack was about to take place. That way, they managed to cover many bombings, and the recordings were then shipped to the BBC, who broadcast the news back to Denmark. This provided an invaluable alternative to the stories in the official censored media, which were often forced to downplay any defeats suffered by the occupational forces and exaggerate the public sabotage caused by the resistance groups.

When the German authorities decided to introduce a curfew in the summer of 1944, it was the final straw after a period of many offenses against the public: The murder of the popular and publicly anti-nazi playwright and pastor Kaj Munk in January 1944, the violence of the Danish pro-nazi Schalburg Corps towards the public, and the execution of the Hvidsten resistance group on 29 June, 1944. The reaction was the so-called People's Strike, which lasted from late June to early July 1944, when the occupational forces finally agreed to remove the Schalburg Corps from the streets. It was a great victory for the people, who had been emboldened by the hope of an impending defeat for the Nazi empire. Less than a year later, the German troops surrendered, and Denmark was freed by the British forces on 5 May.

In the postwar years, the Social Democrats and the Liberals (along with the Conservative Party) took office interchangeably, while the state was prosecuting Danish war criminals, resulting in 15.000 trials and 46 executions. Unsurprisingly, the time was dominated by a need for peace and safety and a continued rationing of basic goods. Meanwhile, German refugees were crossing the Danish borders, and not all Danes were prepared to help them, as they found it difficult to distinguish them from their former oppressors. In 1947, King Christian X passed away after having been the emblem of Danish defiance to many Danes during the occupation. As will be mentioned in chapter 4.2., his funeral service was covered extensively by the DBC and followed by thousands of people flooding the streets.

Conclusion

Like in many other European countries and the United States, 1925-50 was a time of political, social, and cultural change in Denmark. In the wake of WWI, the country was rapidly changing into an industrialised society with urbanisation, a growing working class, and unhealthy living conditions in the fast-growing cities. At the same time new technologies such as the radio, and institutions such as the public library were providing information and access to cultural products for the masses, something hitherto reserved for the upper classes. In the 1920s and 1930s many new social initiatives were introduced, aimed at improving public health via exercise, and open-air activities, a movement, which was further supported by the Social Reform from 1933 and the Vacation Act from 1937. This stage of modernity brought improvements to Danish infrastructure and architecture (among other things, a new bridge called *Lillebæltsbroen* and a fast train, both introduced in 1935) as well as new ideas concerning gender roles, sexual education and women's rights. Later, many of the modernistic trends from the 1930s were put to a halt, while Denmark was under German occupation for five years during WWII. Even though the Danish government followed a collaborationist strategy, there was increased censorship and resistance 1940-45 - especially towards the end. After the war, Denmark joined the UN, started to rebuild the country and lost King Christian X, who had been a key figure during the occupation. As we shall see in chapters 5.3. and 6, many of these events were reflected in, discussed by, or served as a distant backdrop to, *The Hansen Family*. First though, I will introduce eight examples from the history of the DBC in the same period, in order to show how some of the abovementioned developments were reflected on the radio across different programmes and formats.

4.2. The First 25 Years at the DBC²⁶¹

Although I will be presenting contextual *as well as* textual analyses in chapters 5 and 6, my main interest in THF regards the actual series, as a cultural phenomenon and in terms of its content and themes. Therefore I have chosen to explore this approach even further by telling the history of the DBC 1925-50 through an introduction of radio programmes from the period. This is done in the conviction that, as was argued in the Hajkowski (2010) quotation in chapter 2.1.4.: “Programs are key historical artifacts, at once the end product of policy and a link between institutions and public, production, and reception.”²⁶² Thus, I do not propose to write a history of the institution²⁶³ itself as much as of its manifestations to give a clearer impression of what was actually produced and broadcast. I will address some of the highlights through eight examples that represent main strands and developments in the DBC’s approach to broadcasting. Naturally this means I am renouncing any claim on comprehensiveness, even if I have tried to find programmes covering the period as widely as possible in terms of radio genres and placement in history. What connects them all though, is their relevance to THF, a point, which is crucial for the present chapter. The individual relations will be mentioned in the course of the introductions, along with references to the larger history of the DBC. Yet, even with this careful selection I do not mean to over-stress the specificity of any single programme. Contradictory as it may seem, every one of the examples has been chosen as a representative of its kind as well as for its singularity.

²⁶¹ In the following I have chosen to only use the translated version of the programme titles in the main text, while keeping the Danish version in the references in order to make them searchable online.

²⁶² Op.cit. Hajkowski (2010). p. 4.

²⁶³ The better part of the literature on early DBC history has been written by (former) employees at the DBC. This tends to be reflected in the texts in the shape of their often biased and subjective testimonials. However, they contain crucial details about early broadcasting that few other publications deliver and so should not be disregarded. The main titles relevant for my research period are the 15th anniversary publication (DBC15, 1940), the 25th anniversary publication (DBC25, 1950), and the three volumes dedicated to the artistic programmes: Nørgaard, Felix, et al.: *Radioteater, musik, TV-teater, de musiske udsendelser DR 1925-1975, Vol. 1*, Nyt Nordisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1975. (DMU). These publications, which have contributed extensively to my research, have been and will be referenced throughout this thesis. For a more detailed historiography of early Danish radio history, see Poulsen (2006), pp. 61-77.

The Danish Broadcasting Corporation was launched in 1925 as a trial arrangement meant to appease, gather, and control the many battling radio clubs at the time.²⁶⁴ Only a year later it received the status of proper state owned broadcasting corporation with the introduction of the Radio Act of 1926 and the objective to ensure that the broadcast content be “of a versatile cultural and enlightening nature”.²⁶⁵ Singer and radio enthusiast Emil Holm was appointed Director-General and he approached the job with great fervour, especially in matters of sound quality and cultural programming. He remained on the post from 1925-37, during which period he played an important part in the establishment of national broadcasting in Denmark. Holm was since replaced by long-time radio employee F.E. Jensen, who took the title “Managing Director” and remained in the position 1937-61, focusing on his administrative strengths, while three separate Programme Directors tended to the more editorial assignments. There was only one national radio channel for the whole period, which, as mentioned before, was only followed by a second channel and the introduction of television to the corporation until 1951. This is a very rough sketch of the structural aspects of the first 25 years of broadcasting. With that in mind, I will proceed with eight examples from the radio schedule.

***Morning Gymnastics (1927-52)*²⁶⁶: Physical exercise for the people**

Although there were no other long running drama serials than THF in this period, there were other popular “series” on the DBC. One of the early and long-running fixtures was the *Morning Gymnastics*-programme, introduced in 1927 and taken off the air on the exact day of its 25th anniversary in 1952. Much of its popularity was due to the charismatic speaker “Captain Jespersen” (Jens Peter Jespersen), who was the voice and strong character behind all the workouts. Judging by the surviving recordings and “the White Programmes” (WP) I mentioned in chapter 3.2. the *Morning Gymnastics* programme was generally broadcast between 7am and 9am daily, except on Sundays.

²⁶⁴ Rosenkjær, Jens: *75 år i oplysningens tjeneste*, Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, Copenhagen, 1973. Pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁵ *Lov om Radiospredning*, (Radio Act) 13.03.1926, § 4. Original version: “af alsidig kulturel og oplysende Art.” For a more detailed introduction to the Radio Act and public service broadcasting at the DBC, see chapter 4.3.

²⁶⁶ According to a website dedicated to Kaptajn Jespersen, the programme started out as *Berlingske Tidendes Morgengymnastik* and was not named *Morning Gymnastics* until 1928: <http://www.kaptajn-jespersen.dk/menu/liv.html>.

An average programme consisted only of Jespersen's directions, without music or any other accompaniment. Using a curious mix of the imperative and the infinitive verb form, his speech is authoritative yet friendly, while his energetic and thrusting rhythm demonstrates the effects of his own gymnastics method. All of Jespersen's programmes contain two alternating "levels", one is the instructional level, and the other is the motivational level. For every exercise there is a higher philosophy behind, it is not just a matter of physical endurance but of mental steadfastness, which permeates every area of life, which is thereby controllable through perseverance, according to Jespersen. Along with programmes such as *Gymnastics for the ladies* introduced in 1926, Jespersen's broadcasts represented part of the DBC's dedication to physical education in terms of exercising the minds *as well as* the bodies of the listeners. Jespersen's quite rigorous approach to physical and mental health earned him a place in the public eye as well as made him the target of comic strips and commercials. He was even mentioned in an episode of THF²⁶⁷ from 1929. In it, Å is subjected to Jespersen's morning workouts and after failing to follow the instructions, Å returns to bed while G insists on making it a regular event. It is a comedic take on the larger exercising trend, expressed in Jespersen's own large-scale gymnastics events around the country, as well as some of the initiatives mentioned in chapter 4.1.: The establishment of Dansk Vandrelaug (The Danish Hiking Society) in 1930, the opening of several public swimming pools²⁶⁸, and the growing Outdoor Movement, which had been spreading across Europe during the first decades of the 20th century. This increased public excitement around sports and exercise was also reflected by the DBC with transmissions from the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin (see below) and open air transmissions from hiking societies and hostels around the country in the same year. Furthermore, the advent of portable radios in the 1930s blended well with the newfound interest in open-air activities. Hence, advertisements in the *Radio Listener* from the late 1920s and mid 1930s were ripe with images of couples listening to the radio on the beach, at sea, on Midsummer night etc. Together, this shows the DBC as an important agent in disseminating a particular body and health ideal among the Danes. In a larger perspective, the exercise programmes were part of the category of programmes aimed at shaping the *activities* of the listeners,

²⁶⁷ *Untitled episode*, (afsnit 4), 21.06.1929. I will return to this episode in chapter 6.3.4.

²⁶⁸ E.g. Øbrohallen (1930), Frederiksberg Public Pool (1931-34), Ollerup Public Pool (1926).

in a way that benefited society as a whole, such as was also the case with the different housekeeping advice shared on housewife programmes during and after WWII (see below).

The Thursday Concert (1933-now): Music for the mind

Another, and even longer running fixture was *The Thursday Concert*, which recently celebrated its 80th anniversary. Along with the Sunday service, and the *Morning Gymnastics*, *The Thursday Concert* was among the first “series” introduced on the air and in spite of recent controversy surrounding the former both of them are still running today. *The Thursday Concert* was very much the brainchild of Holm, whose ardent love for classical music was clearly reflected in the radio schedules as well as in the archives.²⁶⁹ Quite remarkably, an excerpt from the first concert on 28 September 1933²⁷⁰ has survived featuring only violinist Nathan Milstein playing virtuoso solo segments conducted by Nicolai Malko. The concept of *The Thursday Concert* was simple: it was a weekly broadcast of a two hour concert with a live audience and performed by the house symphony orchestra of the DBC. Their repertoire was on an international level including the Vienna classics, the romantic, the late romantic and impressionist periods with a few new pieces as well, all dictated by Holm in detail.²⁷¹ The programme was even so much of a Holm-fixture that a reporter was worried about its future existence when interviewing the new Director-General, F.E. Jensen in 1937: “It has been feared that your liberal opinions would also affect some areas in an unfortunate way. Are you considering touching the great Thursday Concerts for instance?”²⁷² However, Jensen did not intend on making any immediate changes and his following comment reveals something of the status and function of *The Thursday Concert* at the time: “In my opinion the *seriousness* of these concerts must not be removed, and the execution must

²⁶⁹ Many of the oldest surviving programmes from DBC history are concert recordings of the DBC house orchestra.

²⁷⁰ *Nathan Milstein, uddrag af den første...* 28.09.1933. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=4af674d3-f49f-420f-90a7-22b9f65d8b23>

²⁷¹ Op.cit. DMU (1975), p. 303.

²⁷² Unknown author: “Statsradiofoniens nye Chef” in: *Radiolytteren*, 20.02.1937. Original version: “Man har frygtet, at Deres liberale Synspunkter ogsaa vil komme til at virke uheldigt paa nogle Omraader. Paataenker De at røre ved de store Torsdagskoncerter f.Eks?” (Henceforth: Statsradiofoniens nye Chef, 1937)

still be kept at the present high level.”²⁷³ The concerts were an expression of the somewhat bourgeois outset of the DBC, according to which they considered it their duty to expose the listeners to serious classical music. Yet, during WWII the same orchestra was performing lighter music, substituting a few of *The Thursday Concerts* with popular *Tuesday Concerts* as a part of Chairman of the Radio Council Bomholt’s wish to also reach the “not yet completely musically aware, average, work-weary person”.²⁷⁴ This juxtaposition of artistic and entertaining endeavours in the same orchestra was met with some dissatisfaction. Surprisingly, the criticism not only regarded the mixing of high and low culture, but primarily the privileging of the orchestra’s more “serious” repertoire at the expense of the lighter concerts.²⁷⁵ Again, the serious debates of taste, quality, and responsibility in broadcasting is related to the simple dichotomy of high and low, as was seen in the radio drama debates in chapter 2.2.2. Furthermore, the didactic dimension in exposing listeners to elite culture becomes even clearer, considering the fact that the introductions made by Director-General Holm before musical and dramatic performances were the earliest lectures broadcast by the DBC.²⁷⁶

***Ragnhild Hveger at the Olympic Games in Berlin (1936, 2:22 mins)*²⁷⁷: Covering the national pride**

Another branch of popular and light programming were the sports broadcasts, which made events such as the Six Day Bicycle Races in Forum²⁷⁸ and football matches into national spectacles. One of the men who pioneered sports reporting was Gunnar “Nu” Hansen, who had recently been hired by the DBC, when he was sent to Berlin to cover the 1936 Summer Olympics. This was the moment when he became known to the

²⁷³ Ibid. Original version: “Efter min Opfattelse maa disse Koncerter *Lødighed* ikke fjernes, og Udførelsen maa stadig holdes oppe paa den nuværende Højde.”

²⁷⁴ Op.cit. DMU, p. 332. Original version: “[...] endnu ikke fuldt musikopdragne gennemsnits- og arbejdsstrætte menneske.”

²⁷⁵ Ibid. pp. 333-334.

²⁷⁶ This point is made in Bertolt, Oluf: “Radioen og Folkeoplysningen” in: Breidahl, Axel and Rée, Knud (eds.): *Danmarks Radio - Den danske statsradiofoni gennem 15 aar*, Chr. Erichsens Forlag, Copenhagen, 1940. Pp. 114-130. Reference to p. 114.

²⁷⁷ *Ragnhild Hveger i de Olympiske Lege i Berlin*, 15.08.1936. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=67dfa9e9-a1c8-4fbb-a362-41ce93b4b5d5>

²⁷⁸ These races were also referred to a couple of times on THF in 1934, usually as “Specifics” - This is one of the seven re-proportioning categories, which I will present in chapter 6.1., and analyse in chapter 6.2.7. “Specifics” are usually details in the scripted dialogue, which serve to link the drama to the then current time by mentioning topical events or people.

Danish public and acquired the nickname “Nu”, which means “now” in Danish and referred to his characteristic way of dramatising the sporting action to the listeners in a way that made them feel present at the event. When reporting from the 400-meter freestyle swimming race, where Danish contestant Ragnhild Hveger secured the Olympic silver medal, Hansen took the time to describe the brilliant sunshine over the stadium before throwing himself into the excitement. At the beginning of the very last round, he remarked about the swimmers: “Now she [Hveger] turned first, and now Mastenbroek, and now Wingard...This is so exciting!”²⁷⁹ His attention to the sports as well as the details of the surroundings was communicated in dense, dramatic sentences creating an impression of the audience, the location, the atmosphere, as well as of the athletes. Later, Hansen also took part in the first live broadcast from a foreign sports event at the 1948 Olympics in London. Events like these created ample opportunity to address a national pride, and construct a sense of national unity expressed in the frequent use of “us” and “we”.²⁸⁰ In that sense sports reporting was related to programmes such as the broadcast from the funeral service of King Christian X, where a shared national sorrow was taken for granted, and in THF, which emitted an image of the average, and to some extent ideal, Danish family.²⁸¹

***The Home Consultant at Work (1942, 24:45 mins)*²⁸² and *The Housewife Asks - the Consultants Answer (1947, 31:19 mins)*²⁸³**

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.4., THF was not the only programme dedicated to domestic life. There were several other representations of the home and family life on the air in the 1930s and 1940s. A recurring phenomenon in the 1940s were the regular series called *The Housewife's Two Minutes* and *The Housewife's 10 Minutes*. Both of them were produced by *Statens Husholdningsråd* (The State Housekeeping Council) with the aim of professionalising work in the domestic sphere and shaping informed women in charge

²⁷⁹ The underlinings are mine and are meant to indicate Hansen's emphases. Original version: “Nu vendte hun først, og nu Mastenbroek, og nu Wingard...Ih hvor er det spændende!”

²⁸⁰ Op. cit, DMH, p. 202.

²⁸¹ This idea of the “average” turning into the “ideal” is what I referred to in chapter 2.2.4. as the “normative strategy”.

²⁸² *Hjemkonsulten arbejder*, 28.03.1942. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=b003806d-a51e-4a7d-b905-11badba045d8>

²⁸³ *Husmoderen spørger - konsultenterne svarer*, 14.04.1947. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=a8e6e0af-3c6d-4795-a8a2-01d3e8254c22>

of their own budget and household. It was a way of creating a community for the housewives as well as a platform for sharing practical experience in cleaning, cooking, mending clothes etc. In a broadcasting perspective, the housewife programmes were part of the DBC's extensive collaboration with different trade unions and listener organisations established in the name of public education. Since the late 1920s they had been offered air time for lectures or programmes of interest to their members, such as news of the latest developments in farming or introductions to the different institutions of society.

At once dogmatic and potentially empowering, the housewife programmes broadcast an ideal for the housewife to follow, expectations, which G from THF often discussed openly though without direct reference to these programmes. Ideal as she may have seemed to many a male listener²⁸⁴, G's character also shared her frustrations with being a housewife, with the boredom of domestic life, and especially the difficulty of making ends meet and still managing to serve delicious and nourishing food for the family. This issue of food on a budget was a recurring theme in radio features such as *The Home Consultant at Work* (1942) and *The Housewife Asks - the Consultants Answer* (1947). Both of them covered the informative activities of *The State Housekeeping Council* at different locations in Copenhagen.

In *The Home Consultant at Work*, the reporter follows two consultants making house calls with regular housewives in the narrow districts of the city. One of them only visits people with whom she has an arrangement, while the other one rings every doorbell in her area in order to reach the ones most in need of her assistance. Although all of the dialogues sound slightly rehearsed, the feature still offers a very intimate peek into the everyday struggles of ordinary people. Hence one of the visits is with a "widower" who has taken over the housekeeping ever since his wife fell ill. He shows considerable pride in what he has achieved in terms of home-salted herring and immaculate housekeeping. *The Housewife Asks - the Consultants Answer* introduced a particular housewife information desk, where no question, whether about mending underwear or removing

²⁸⁴ See chapter 3.1.

mould from a jar of marmalade, was too small for the female consultants. In the course of the informal interview, the reporter and the consultant discuss the increased professionalism of housewives. The consultant insists on referring to it as a serious vocation in need of acknowledgement, especially because of the severity of the times in the postwar years, when money and produce were scarce.

Considering the popularity of housewives programmes and the many overlapping themes, it is very likely that THF author Locher would have used them as inspiration for his storylines. Hence, there are episodes devoted to raw food, horsemeat, household budgets etc all of which are mentioned in the features above. While these programmes offered practical advice and realism, THF aired more of the frustrations and dreams hidden behind the professional perfectionism, which was an alternative kind of “reality” for the listeners to identify with. Naturally, the larger context of WWII not only expressed itself in the frugal advice of housewife programmes. There were also much more serious consequences for the broadcasting activities at the DBC, such as the enforced German propaganda broadcasts.

24 Hours on the Eastern front (1943, 4:31 mins²⁸⁵.)

When Denmark was occupied by Germany on April 9, 1940 it had an immediate effect on the media, the DBC included. Officials stated that it was not a matter of occupation but rather of collaboration, which meant that it was still possible to negotiate in the first couple of years. This became the job of Managing Director Jensen, who by all accounts tried his best to avoid the most Germany friendly broadcasts and direct propaganda material. Then, towards the end of August 1943, the collaborationist government collapsed and Denmark was declared in a state of emergency, increasing censorship on all media fronts. Already in the beginning of 1943 the tension between the Danes and the occupational forces had become tangible and the pressure to broadcast even more German material had increased. In the archives today are several direct propaganda programmes from the spring of 1943, describing the war from a central European perspective, mainly with a focus on the strong German soldiers and the destruction

²⁸⁵ *24 timer ved Østfronten*, 12.05.1943. Link to the LARM archive:
<http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=6f5d2045-651d-4a2c-bf88-7cbeb8e0a81c>

caused by the Allies or the Russians. In the broadcast *24 Hours on the Eastern Front*, a Doctor Kristian Zarp (?) reads a message for several minutes, describing the hours before, during, and after a Russian shell attack on the Eastern front. The text is fraught with poetic description of waving grass under the blood red sun and the blasting flames from shells digging deep holes in the ground. The German soldiers are described as calmly awaiting yet another day's battle and fighting while dreaming of the green forests of their homeland. The juxtaposition of the beautiful countryside before the battle and the sudden disruption of deathly bombs neatly paints an inhuman picture of the Russian army, which is mentioned only as "the infantry", while the German army is composed of individual soldiers, taking in the beauty of the surroundings and noticing a spider in its web in the trenches. It is a striking example of the way *pathos*, rather than *ethos* and *logos*, dominated this series of propaganda-messages. Although it is often stated that the Danes were far from perceptible to any messages from the Germans, these programmes were a part of the broadcasting schedules during WWII. THF was another unavoidable part, broadcast without hesitation every single week through the war. In 1944, which is the THF-year I have chosen to focus on from the war, there are few, if any, references to propaganda. However, as will be discussed in chapter 6.2.6. the material offered the possibility of making indirect comments on the situation in the shape of "Nudges", while still darting the censorship. Meanwhile, programmes from the BBC also reached Danish listeners and thus offered an alternative news source. There was even collaboration between the BBC and the illegal radio studio *Det kæmpende Danmarks Radiostudie*²⁸⁶, which documented Danish sabotage on German targets in Denmark and had it broadcast back to the country via the BBC. After having had its authority compromised during the war, the DBC needed to make some drastic changes, which was expressed in a new approach to documenting the state of affairs in Denmark, as we shall see in the next example.

²⁸⁶ Thing, Morten: "Det kæmpende Danmarks Radiostudie og Film" in: *Arbejderhistorie*, vol. 1, ed. April, 2012. Pp. 14-31.

***The Man in the Basement* (1947, 32:52 mins.²⁸⁷)**

As mentioned, after the war the DBC needed to find a way of legitimising itself to the audience after years of German influence. As will be discussed in the next chapter on public service, this was one of the reasons Social Democratic politician and chairman of the Radio Council, Bomholt, introduced the term “dangerous radio”²⁸⁸ in 1947. It marked a radicalized return to left wing radio ideals of making stronger connections between society and its citizens by provoking debates on social and economic issues in postwar Denmark. One man who is often mentioned in connection to “dangerous radio” was the German-Austrian immigrant Willy Reunert, who, along with the reporter Sven Alkærsig, made the social realist feature *The Man in the Basement* (1947). It was a particularly powerful example of the new DBC strategy as well as a departure from the kind of idealizing home representations discussed above. In it, Alkærsig visits four different homes, all of which reflect the then current housing shortage, which forced people to live under the most appalling conditions. There was the single mother of ten children living in a two-bedroom flat with rats and damp walls, who wished she had just one more room. Nothing else. Or the “man in the basement”, who spent his nights in a basement in the city, helped by a friendly janitor. Neither his wife nor his family knew anything of his situation. These different stories are connected by Alkærsig, who navigates the listeners through cramped spaces with great empathy and indignation over the living conditions: “But do you believe that this was ever meant as a home for humans?”²⁸⁹, he asks the hesitating mother of ten. There is no question what his stance is on the matter, as he keeps urging the interviewees not to downplay their misery. Even the interviewees were allowed more airtime than usual, which suddenly made their situation the responsibility of the listening public.²⁹⁰ Apparently the programme further ignited an existing debate on housing, which even made it to the political level.²⁹¹ This was the objective of “dangerous radio”, to excite debate and encourage action. It was also an example of the feature format, which had its roots in different genres such as the literary montages of the 1920s and Aksel Dahlerup’s “Høre billeder” (listening images)

²⁸⁷ *Manden i kælderhalsen*, 03.01.1947. Link to the LARM archive:

<http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=c09083b3-0e0f-7842-921e-63f336a847d8>

²⁸⁸ Op.cit. Poulsen (2006), pp. 360-367.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 380. My translation of Poulsen’s transcription. Original version: “Men tror De på at den nogensinde egentlig har været beregnet til menneskebolig?”

²⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 381.

²⁹¹ Ibid. p. 381.

from the 1930s. The format was finally recognised at the DBC with the establishment of the Features Department in 1946, with reference to the BBC. The social involvement has since been a strong tradition in the DBC feature, which continued until the department was closed in 2007, which some viewed as the end of the genre. However, similarly complex and/or socially involved audio narratives have since started appearing in different incarnations such as the audio productions of the digital magazine *Third Ear*²⁹² and the documentary on Radio24syv.²⁹³

The Funeral Service of King Christian X (1947, 2:19:04 hours)²⁹⁴

In popular imagination King Christian X of Denmark, has been given an almost mythical status. In spite of his very unpopular intervention in the so-called “Easter Crisis” in 1920, his defiant insistence on riding through the occupied capital on his horse during the occupation, earned him a place in the people’s hearts. When he died in 1947, his funeral procession was of national proportions and the DBC produced a long transmission²⁹⁵, capturing the ritual and the reactions of the people, often with the reporter speaking on behalf of the people (again, it was the ever popular Aksel Dahlerup and his colleagues from the Features Department)²⁹⁶. Especially when describing the sad atmosphere in the church at the beginning of the transmission and concluding the reason: “Because *every single Dane* owes King Christian his gratitude and because *every single one of us* cared for him.”²⁹⁷ Not only was this a radiophonic construction of national mourning, it was also a display of technical prowess. Yards and yards of cable connected the dramatic events with the transmission lorries placed in strategic places around Copenhagen allowing the listeners to follow (and the technicians to record on 5-minute shellac records), the journey of the King’s casket from the church, to the train

²⁹² <http://thirdear.dk>

²⁹³ <http://www.radio24syv.dk/programmer/24syv-dokumentar/>

²⁹⁴ *Kong Christian X's bisættelse*, 30.04.1947. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=94188db9-4ea3-4c7d-81e4-e9698ecc9d1a>

²⁹⁵ Naturally there are plenty of similar examples of royal transmissions. For more information, see Hajkowski (2010), Scannell and Cardiff (1991), and Robertson (2008).

²⁹⁶ Although a separate department for “features” was established in 1946, it was subsumed under the existing and more general “Reportageafdelingen” only one year later. Still, I have chosen to use the English term “Features Department” in this context.

²⁹⁷ *Kong Christians X's bisættelse*. The italics in the English translation are mine. Original version: “[...] fordi hver enkelt dansk skylder Kong Christian tak og fordi hver enkelt af os holdt af ham.”

station, and to his final resting place in Roskilde west of Copenhagen. Broadcasting had become mobile, live, and national in a way that only a few other programmes had managed to do. An earlier example of the national transmission was the aforementioned 1935 opening of the Lillebælt bridge in western Denmark with a speech from the Prime Minister and the sound of the fast train arriving as well as transmissions from the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. This kind of broadcasts was particularly suited to addressing the nation as a whole. It played on expected national sentiments by referring to the high standard of Danish infrastructure, national pride in the sporting excellence of one's countrymen, or taking the shared sorrow at the loss of a national monarch for granted. Compared to such singular events, THF's national appeal is rather based on the recognisable and the mundane, but considering its weekly recurrence, it should not be underestimated. Interestingly, reporter Dahlerup visited the new King Frederik IX and Queen Ingrid at Amalienborg Castle a few years after the funeral. It was a very different impression of the royal family, with a much more relaxed and intimate atmosphere than before. Just before entering the royal chambers, Dahlerup muses: "It is truly a fairytale. But it is also something else. It is the story of a happy Danish family with a father, a mother, and three little girls."²⁹⁸ With this remark, he heralds the increased interest in and mediation of the personal lives of royals and their perfectly "ordinary" habits in the course of the 20th century. This was yet another way of idealising family life on the radio.

One Hundred Kroner (1949, 1:09:21 hours²⁹⁹)

Even before the war the DBC had experimented with the use of magnetic tape. This was put to a halt during the war and it was not introduced as a general practice in Denmark until the late 1940s. Once adopted by the producers, this technology offered endless new montage possibilities to the inventive minds, which had hitherto been restricted by having to broadcast either live, from steel wire, or from records with a very limited timespan (approx. five mins.). One of the pioneers of this technology was the modernist

²⁹⁸ *Besøg hos den kongelige familie på Amalienborg*. Unknown date, but some time in 1949 or 1950, as Princess Margrethe is 9 years old (born in April, 1940). Original version: "Det er virkelig et eventyr. Men det er også noget andet. Det er fortællingen om en lykkelig dansk familie med far og mor og tre små piger." Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=1c877094-d93e-42b9-ae1d-d23914695c15>

²⁹⁹ *Hundrede Kroner*, 02.12.1949. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=6f4f3b5c-3938-4140-a896-0aa0a2bae32d>

playwright and author H. C. Branner, whose contribution to the radio drama debate was discussed in chapter 2.1.2. His radio drama debut *Postlude* (1932³⁰⁰) received great reviews. However, years later Branner was still waiting for the developments in the genre he had hoped for, and a properly radiophonic drama had yet to be created. Once the magnetic tape was introduced, he wrote *One Hundred Kroner* (1949)³⁰¹, a play that followed his own visions from the 1941 article. Set in a bar, *One Hundred Kroner* is a montage of several different stories involving a 100 kroner-bill. The stories revolve around relationships and elements of prostitution and gambling, but because of the way it has been edited together, it does not form the impression of a linear story, but instead offers a musical variation on a theme. The same elements of man, woman, money, and dependency are combined in several different constellations with the sound fading in and out from the conversations in the bar. This production marked the birth of an individual genre, independent of stage drama and created with special attention to the radiophonic possibilities.

In 1958 the Danish modernist/avantgarde composer Else Marie Pade, created her *Symphonie Magnetophonique*. It was a musical tribute to the magnetic tape, a montage of city sounds representing the course of 24 hours in Copenhagen, inspired by the musique concrète developed by avantgarde composer Pierre Schaeffer. Along with *One Hundred Kroner*, *Symphonie Magnetophonique* formed the experimental counterparts to entertaining radio drama of the THF kind, which may have made small technical advances during its run³⁰², but never challenged the radiophonic boundaries in any way. If the experimental programmes were aimed at an elite audience (and produced towards or after the end of the period covered here), there were other “serious” broadcasts for a larger audience, with stage productions from the classical repertoire (Ibsen, Molière) and social plays of the 1940s. As mentioned in chapter 2.1.2., Bomholt considered THF a truly radiophonic series, and yet it was more similar to serials in the printed press or revues from the popular stage than it ever was to the majority of its

³⁰⁰ *Efterspil*, 19.09.1932.

³⁰¹ Branner, H. C.: *Hundrede Kroner*, 02.12.1949, 1:09:21 hours. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=6f4f3b5c-3938-4140-a896-0aa0a2bae32d>

³⁰² See chapter 5.3. on THF through the years.

contemporaries in radio drama, where much of the dialogue seemed stilted in comparison to the lively chatter of Å & G.

Conclusion

These examples from Danish radio history contribute to a general impression of the entertaining and educational aspects of the DBC 1925-50. Once more, the programmes are entangled in the discussion of high versus low culture, and once more the multitude of approaches shows a dedication to both aspects as an integral part of public service broadcasting. Together, the programmes mentioned represent different ways of reflecting domestic life from the instructional housewife programmes, to the politically laden features on the housing shortage of the 1930s and 1940s, and the idyllic visit at the Royal Castle. Furthermore, they show ways of addressing a national audience either in popular programmes such as sports transmissions from the Olympic Games, *Thursday Concerts*, or the more solemn occasions like the funeral service of King Christian X. Finally, such different broadcasts as the Reunert feature, the morning gymnastics, the German propaganda, and the Branner play all tried to influence or challenge the audience in each their direction, whether to social action, to improve their physical health, to side with Germany, or to experience radio in a whole new way, which blurred the borders between music and drama. From gymnastics to avantgarde radio, from domestic stories to national events, this historical outline has been an attempt at capturing some aspects of the DBC's dedication to "versatility". In the next chapter I will introduce the origins and developments of this concept in the public service debates of the first decades of Danish broadcasting.

4.3. The DBC and Early Public Service Broadcasting

Introduction

When discussing public service in the early years of Danish radio³⁰³, it is difficult not to mention a certain comma in the 1930 Radio Act that radically changed the interpretation of the first Radio Act from 1926. Especially seeing as the Radio Act of 1930 was not altered again until 1959, thus making the 1930 version the one that applies for the greater part of my research period. In order to learn more about its ongoing interpretation and practical application, it is necessary to consult statements made by different radio employees as well as by radio reviewers.³⁰⁴ The ones I have chosen were included as representatives of general strands in the discussion, all of which are still seen in the public service debates today. To put this in very simplified terms, it was a debate between right wing ideals of individual *Bildung* and canonised highbrow culture vs. left wing demands for mass education (and entertainment) in order to shape informed citizens through debates and lectures.

The majority of the sources used here preside on an ideological plane and it can be rather difficult to trace the steps from there and down to the different levels of production, especially to the area of radio drama. While genres such as lectures and news are often directly linked to discussions of mass education, the radio dramatic genres are either dismissed as entertainment (crime fiction, serials) or as inherently educational by way of exposing the audience to the fine arts (single plays, Ibsen, Shakespeare). The same distinction applies to music and other art forms on the radio. However I am working under the assumption that many of the “highbrow” ideals informed the decisions made in connection to popular radio programmes such as THF. This is very important to keep in mind during the discussion below.

³⁰³ Actually, Bertolt speaks of “public enlightenment” (“Folkeoplysning”) in: DBC15 (1940). P. 114. AND Stauning refers to “the organised social service” (“den organiserede Samfundstjeneste”) in: “Forord”, in: DBC15 (1940). Pp. 5-6. The reference is from p. 5.

³⁰⁴ Since the purpose of the current chapter is to discuss Danish versions of public service 1925-50, I will not be including many details about the British origins and interpretations of the concept. For more information about these aspects see: Scannell, Paddy: “Public service broadcasting: the history of a concept” in: Buscombe, Edward (ed.): *British Television: a reader*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000. Pp. 45-62. “Public Service Broadcasting” (chapter 1) in: Scannell and Cardiff (1991). Pp. 3-23.

Conservative interpretations of public service

Returning to what must be the most consequential comma in Danish media history. In the first Radio Act from 1926, created the year after the DBC started as a trial arrangement, there is very little detail about the visions for the actual content of radio programmes. In fact, there is only one sentence in § 4, stating that Radiorådet (The Radio Council) is in charge of ensuring that the programmes are “of a versatile cultural and enlightening nature”.³⁰⁵ When the next Radio Act of 1930 described the responsibility of The Radio Council as ensuring that the broadcasts be “of a versatile, cultural and enlightening nature”³⁰⁶, the only difference was a comma. A member of the committee in charge of the 1930 act pointed out the increased openness to interpretation connected to the added comma. Then Minister of Public Works, Johannes Friis-Skotte, objected, saying that:

There is no particular intention behind it. I do not know whether there is a printing error in one or the other version at present. There is no particular intention behind it whatsoever [sic]. The idea was to leave those conditions completely unchanged.³⁰⁷

Nevertheless, now that “versatile” was no longer directly connected to cultural programming, it could apply to any part of the daily output.³⁰⁸ A mere two years later, the notion of “versatility” had become increasingly influential, at least according to Director-General Holm, who held a radio speech called *Radioprogrammernes Tilblivelse* (The Creation of the Radio Programmes) in 1932.³⁰⁹ It was a description of the different processes and considerations involved with creating a weekly radio schedule and in that connection he highlighted that versatility was of the utmost importance in achieving the best possible results for the listeners. Another very important statement was his description of the foundation for broadcasting as “independence, matter-of-

³⁰⁵ Op.cit. *Lov om Radiospredning*, 13.03.1926, §4. Original version: “af alsidig kulturel og oplysende Art.”

³⁰⁶ *Lov om Radiospredning*, (The Radio Act, 1930) 21.03.1930, §5. Original version: “af alsidig, kulturel og oplysende Art.”

³⁰⁷ See: *Rigsdagstidende. Folketinget Forhandlinger, 82. ord. samling, 1929-30, I*. Column 3738: Original version: “Der er intet tilsigtet dermed. Jeg ved ikke i dette Øjeblik, om der er en Trykfejl i det ene eller det andet. Der er intet som helst tilsigtet dermed [sic]. Man har ment, at Forholdene i saa Henseende skal være ganske uforandrede.”

³⁰⁸ Op.cit. DMH, p. 213.

³⁰⁹ Holm, Emil: *Radioprogrammernes Tilblivelse*, 1932 (date unknown): <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=4b6c71e3-dafd-4d15-b410-6a7adda33e02>

factness, and open-mindedness”.³¹⁰ By this he meant that every broadcaster must acknowledge and overcome their own prejudices in order to fulfill the requirements of a public institution. The DBC was not to be the guardian of the people - instead, radio was an offer that the people could accept or reject as they pleased. This corresponds quite well with Director-General Reith’s notion of the BBC as a “public utility service”³¹¹ on the same level as electricity and water, a democratic right offered to the people and available at any given time. This democratic aspect was emphasised by Director-General Holm in the finishing line of his radio speech, where he also included the national consideration: “Not for the benefit of a single class, but of all of the Danish people.”³¹²

Moving further down the hierarchy, and thereby closer to the local interpretations of the Radio Act, scriptwriter and DBC employee Otto Rung addressed the subject in 1934: “*Versatility* is the main law altogether for the State Radiophony as well as for the radio plays. We address everyone alternately and will still be playing on a scale from *Erik Bøgh* and all the way up to *Ibsen*.”³¹³ This quotation stresses the importance of versatility even further, as well as reveals the hierarchic order that dominated this concept, apparent in the expression: “all the way up to Ibsen”. Although there might have been an attention to catering to all tastes, valorisations such as this one were still abundant among the radio staff. The quotation also indicates two areas of application of this versatility: the mode of address/target audience and the content of the output. Not only did the DBC strive to reach a wide variety of audiences, they also sought to represent as large a selection of cultural and educational content as possible. Thus referring at the same time to programmes and audiences, it shows versatility as a conveniently elastic concept. When used in cultural debates it was a rhetorical means of seeming inclusive without renouncing any grounds to the other party. It could mean: “We all agree that education is most important, but we ought to have *some* entertainment as well.” or “It cannot be *only* entertaining, it should also be used for educational purposes”.

³¹⁰ Ibid. Original version: “Uafhængighed, saglighed og fordomsfrihed.”

³¹¹ Reith, J. C.: *Broadcast over Britain*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1924. P. 57.

³¹² Op.cit. Holm (1932 broadcast). Original version: “Til gavn ikke for enkelte Samfundslag men for hele det danske Folk.”

³¹³ Rung, Otto: “Hele Landet skriver Hørespil, men...” in *Radiolytteren*, 21.01.1934. P. 6. Original version: “*Alsidighed* er Hovedloven for Statsradiofonien overhovedet og ogsaa for Hørespillene. Vi henvender os vekslende til alle og vil stadig spille paa en Skala lige fra *Erik Bøgh* og op til *Ibsen*.” (My italics).

Both Holm and Rung represent a conservative approach to broadcasting, stressing the national responsibility as well as the value of the cultural canon (Ibsen) in refining the individual human being. Furthermore, as I will point out in chapter 5.5., Holm's vision for a programme such as THF was of a *reflection* of the lives of average Danish families. This again has a conservative underlining in its insistence on maintaining a certain self-image rather than working with a more dynamic concept of Danishness or even rejecting the idea of national coherence altogether.

Progressive designs for the radio

At the other end of the spectrum was ubiquitous cultural critic and all-round provocateur Poul Henningsen, who had a regular radio review or "institutional review" as he called it³¹⁴, in the progressive paper *Politiken* in the mid 1930s. Although his opinions on different cultural matters changed rather unpredictably throughout his life, a common denominator for this "cultural radical" was his unrelenting quest for movement, especially of thought and public opinion. In a radio context this included a constant call for more challenging content for the people and a broadcasting institution that did not merely meet the people where they were, but where they ought to be.³¹⁵ In the course of his general institution review, Henningsen developed an aversion towards THF and many of his comments on public service broadcasting were made in connection to the series. Therefore I have chosen to include them in the discussion here as opposed to in the reception analyses in chapters 5.4. and 5.5. It was the combination of apparent harmlessness, mass audiences, and what he considered inane scripts that made him wary of THF's influence. :

Many listeners will feel that they are almost peeking through their own windows. And why should they not have that pleasure? Because it is only an imitation of reality. It is, on critical inspection, unreal, unlikely, at times dishonest, but so adept at it that the vast audience is not sufficiently irritated by its shortcomings and is instead lured by its craft.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Henningsen, Poul: "Hvad giver Radioen?" in: *Politiken*, 14.11.1936. P. 9.

³¹⁵ E.g. the title of Henningsen's review "Yesterday's Radio: People should *not* get what they like". See: Henningsen, Poul: "Radioen i Gaar: Folk skal *ikke* ha hvad de kan li" in: *Politiken*, 30.11.1936. P. 4.

³¹⁶ Op.cit. Henningsen (30.11.1936), p. 4. Original version: "Mange lyttere vil føle, at det næsten er deres egne vinduer, de kikker ind ad. Hvorfor skal de saa ikke ha den fornøjelse? Fordi det kun er en imitation af virkeligheden. Den er, naar den ses kritisk efter, uægte, usandsynlig, til tider ufin, men saa behændig, at det store publikum ikke irriteres nok af dens skavanker og fanges ind af dens behændighed."

Henningsen called for something of a Brechtian “Verfremdungseffekt” that challenged pre-conceptions and provoked the audiences into independent thinking instead of “luring them with its craft” and merely presenting them with a well-known mirror image. However, it seems equally dangerous to assume that THF was a “recognisable reflection”, when the audience was in fact provoked into action exactly because the reflection seemed inaccurate to them. To some extent, this is what the reception analysis in chapter 5.4. will reveal. About ten years after Henningsen’s radio reviews, thoughts similar to Henningsen’s went into Chairman of the Radio Council Bomholt’s concept of “dangerous radio” (chapter 4.2.). Radio had to rub against the grain and create a debate instead of making an effort to please everyone, a tendency, which Soya also complained about in relation to radio drama (chapter 2.1.2.). Yet, even with these similarities between Henningsen and Bomholt, they had very different cultural views. While Henningsen was an advocate mainly for the more elite cultural products and repeatedly criticised popular culture, Bomholt wanted to broadcast elite culture *as well as* show empathy with the needs of the hard-working people. This was reflected in his introduction of the light *Tuesday Concerts* mentioned in chapter 4.2. However, Henningsen in his time remarked that the fact that the audiences enjoyed THF was no excuse for broadcasting “state-funded stupidification”.³¹⁷ Now that the DBC had finally caught the audience’s attention, it was not meant to squander it on maintaining its own popularity:

We have theatres, Danish and foreign films, weekly magazines and writers, who thrive on the stupidity of people. That is not the DBC’s job. Success and popularisation cannot be the objective of the radio, but a means of engaging people, enlightening them and giving them art.³¹⁸

Henningsen believed in the enlightenment potential of the radio medium, but he was also convinced that the audience needed the paternal guidance of the broadcasters, provided it was not condescending but always raised the bar. Compared to Director-General Holm’s above-mentioned description of radio as an offer, Henningsen’s idea of

³¹⁷ Henningsen, Poul: “Hvem gaar det mest ud over?” (“Whom does it affect the most?”) in: *Politiken*, 16.11.1936. P. 5. Original version: “statsstøttet folkefordummelse.”

³¹⁸ Op.cit. Henningsen (30.11.1936), p. 4. Original version: “Vi har teatre, danske og udenlandske film, ugeblade og skribenter, der lever højt paa menneskenes dumhed. Statsradiofonien har ikke den opgave. Sukces og popularisering kan for radioen ikke være maalet, men et middel til at faa folk i tale, oplyse dem og gi dem kunst.”

paternal guidance seems surprisingly authoritarian and out of tune with the Social Democratic order of the day. This order was expressed by Social Democratic Prime Minister Stauning, who had even grander designs for the radio medium, which were in keeping with the socialist project as a whole:

The State Radiophony [DBC] was intent on making connections with all households in the country and in reality several million households beyond the borders of the country. The ministry [of public affairs] made its contribution. Parliament made its decision, and a state institution was created, free of all speculation, advertising, and private interests, an institution purely aimed at serving its country and its people as a connection to the world.³¹⁹

What is worth noting here is the image of an institution whose primary purpose is not to make culture accessible, to serve nationalist ideology in the sense of defining what constitutes "Danishness" or of delineating the geopolitical contours of the Danish kingdom. Instead Stauning saw the medium as a connecting force, within the country as well as reaching "beyond the borders of the country" and being "a connection to the world". He also highlighted the democratic qualities of the medium, and its ability to share specific information, guidance and entertainment with even the most distant geographic and social regions of Denmark. Just as the then former Director-General Holm, Stauning also described the radio as a service at the listener's disposal. When the new Director-General, now "Managing Director" Jensen was appointed in 1937, he was even more liberal minded when it came to the main objectives of the DBC, as was seen in connection to *The Thursday Concerts* (chapter 4.2.). He said:

My personal opinion about the broadcasts is that *the main task is to entertain* and that the heavily informative programmes must take second place, but if my views are opposed to those of the Radio Council, I cannot follow them through.³²⁰

Whether or not Jensen's objectives in terms of prioritising the popular over the educational were achieved, is a fascinating question, but unfortunately it is beyond the

³¹⁹ Op.cit. Stauning in DBC15 (1940), Pp. 5-6. Original version: "Statsradiofonien anlagdes paa at faa Forbindelse med alle Hjem i Landet og i Virkeligheden med mange Millioner Hjem uden for Landets Grænser. Ministeriet ydede sin Indsats. Rigsdagen tog sin Beslutning, og der skabtes en Statsinstitution, fri for Spekulation, Reklame og privat Interesse, en Institution alene beregnet paa at yde sin Tjeneste for Landet og Folket og som Bindeled ud til Verden."

³²⁰ Op.cit. "Statsradiofoniens nye Chef" (1937). Original version (my italics): "Mine personlige Synspunkter gaar ud paa, at *Hovedopgaven er at virke underholdende*, og at de stærkt oplysende Programmer maa træde i anden Række, men hvis mine Anskuelser er i Modstrid med Radioraadets, kan jeg ikke gennemføre dem."

scope of the present thesis. However, the continued broadcasting of THF in the prime time Sunday slot under Jensen's reign does seem to weigh in his favour.

According to Bertolt³²¹, a longtime member of the Radio Programme Board, the enlightenment project of the DBC was born out of the bourgeois *Bildungsideal*. As mentioned above, this ideal saw the mere exposure to the elevated arts as a way of making man nobler at heart. This was in itself a vast improvement since many of the art forms had hitherto been reserved for the ruling class, as was pointed out by Social Democratic politician Hartvig Frisch in 1928.³²² As mentioned before, the DBC not only aimed at cultural distribution, but also at forming educated and active citizens. It was reflected, among other things, in lectures concerning economy, the different institutions of society and the labourers' conditions. In the arts department, as we have already seen in the endeavors of Bomholt and Jensen, there was a demand for entertainment such as light music, entertainment programmes and comedies.³²³ This was opposed to the more introspective and individualised cultural consumption of the bourgeoisie.³²⁴ However, Bertolt stressed the importance of airing differences, much in the same vein as BBC historiographer Seaton (2007) did in her description of the BBC's handling of "Britishness" (chapter 2.3.2.). What separates them though, is the reason for this airing of differences. While Seaton saw it as an integral part of the *national* obligation of a broadcasting institution such as the BBC, Bertolt considered it a *democratic* virtue:

To me there is no doubt that the Danish radio has fulfilled an important task as an educator in democracy, as its broadcasts have gradually become more and more characterised by versatility, tolerance, and a trust in the people's own sense of responsibility. The very fact that listeners have been able to hear other views than their own on the radio, speakers whose meetings they would never have been able to attend, discussions between political opponents [...] all of those things have been a lesson in tolerance and good citizenship and democracy.³²⁵

³²¹ Op.cit. Bertolt in DBC15 (1940). Pp. 114-129.

³²² See Harsløf, Olav: *Kulturdebat i 20'erne*, Medusa, Copenhagen, 1976. P. 16.

³²³ Op.cit. DMH, p. 155.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Op.cit. Bertolt in DBC15 (1940). P. 125. Original version: "Der er for mig ingen Tvivl om, at den danske radio, efterhaanden som dens Udsendelser mere og mere blev præget af Alsidighed, Tolerance, Tillid til Menneskers egen Ansvarsbevidsthed, har øvet en meget vigtig Funktion som Opdrager til Demokrati. Det, at Lytterne i Radioen har kunnet høre andre Opfattelser end deres egne, Talere, hvis møder de ellers aldrig vilde eller kunde overvære, Diskussioner mellem politiske Modstandere [...] alt saadant har været en Skole i Fordragelighed og godt Borgerskab og Folkestyre."

This final point sums up the collective contribution and objective of the DBC better than any of the other sources. Incidentally, this is also how I see the contribution of THF, though it did operate with a considerably smaller selection of opinions than the DBC as a whole. Still, it lent a voice to many opposite opinions and social classes, even if it maintained the petty-bourgeois lifestyle and position as a norm throughout.

Conclusion

During WWII and the German occupation the debate on radio was largely suspended as discussions of censorship and propaganda took front stage. Then, when Bomholt declared the need for “dangerous radio” in the radio programme for 1947-48, he wanted the listeners to become agitated and not just pacified by entertainment. In fact, he would rather have the audience turn off the radio completely instead of serving as background noise, which was a trend he had noticed in America as well as among Danish listeners.³²⁶ Incidentally, this challenging and “opinionated” style was exactly the kind of provocation that Henningsen called for in connection to THF ten years earlier. Furthermore, it was a new way of interpreting versatility as the single programme no longer needed to represent all (or no) points of view as in Soya’s time (1941), but could present a strong opinion that might then be balanced by another programme. Much later, as another consequence of WWII, it was added into the publication rules of 1964 that democracy was never to be criticised in a broadcast without a counter-argument. In general the Danish discussions of public service operate on the level of the programme category (cultural programmes, educational programmes) and on the institutional level (the DBC as a whole). While hardly anyone contests the need for versatility on a general scale, the lines are drawn much clearer when the discussion revolves around *cultural* versatility, where the constant opposition between high and low culture is played out in many different scenarios. Henningsen called for more challenging radio and elite culture, while Jensen considered entertainment the most important task of the DBC. Bomholt on the other hand tried to balance the two in the recognition of the very real needs of the listeners and the obligation of the DBC as a state institution.

³²⁶ Op.cit. Poulsen (2006), pp. 361-67.

Seen in the above context, THF met some of the demands of the Social Democratic voters by delivering light and recognisable entertainment for the masses, and still managed to project bourgeois values of homeland and hearth - in short, petty-bourgeois entertainment. On the other hand, as will be apparent from the reception analysis in chapter 5.4., voices from both sides complained about the level in THF, often finding it too light and frivolous in its treatment of serious subjects. It may not have been expected to educate anyone, but it was not allowed to misinform either. However, since it did not belong to any of the more openly educational genres (lectures, debates, cultural programmes) it was not measured as such.

4.4. L'Art Pour Larsen³²⁷ - the life of Jens Locher

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, Jens Locher (1889-1952) gave an interview in the conservative paper *Berlingske Tidende*. Most of the discussion concerned his unusually productive and successful life as a playwright, journalist and all-round media man. Many of Locher's replies seem somewhat rehearsed and give the impression that he is the one conducting the interview. At one point the interviewer asks: "As a writer, do you believe in art for art's sake?" and Locher replies: "We have heard enough about *l'art pour l'art*, our time is moving towards *l'art pour Larsen*."³²⁸ Although introducing it as a historical phenomenon here, the notion of *l'art pour Larsen* could be seen as the underlying philosophy of most of his life's work. Furthermore, it was a key component in his ongoing popularity with both audiences and superiors. Not only did this statement showcase the kind of wit that characterized much of his work, but it was also an inside reference to the Danish phenomenon "Larsen", the white-collar worker who

³²⁷ In the absence of any proper biographical works on Jens Locher, the following chapter is based on the few sources available, i.e. interviews, obituary notices, reference works, as well as an informal interview with his grand daughter Hanne Locher (14.10.2012). Further details from Hansen, Peter S.: *Skagensmaleren Carl Locher*, Peter Schmidt Hansen (eget forlag), Birkerød, 2010. A large portion of the information in the above sources is rather vague and unreliable, and for that reason I have chosen to limit the account to information, which could be cross-referenced.

³²⁸ Author unknown: "L'art pour Larsen, Hansen og ligesindede" in: *Berlingske Tidende*, 06.03.1949. P. 15. My translation. Original version: "Er De som Skribent Tilhænger af Kunsten for Kunstens Skyld? / *L'art pour l'art* har vi hørt nok om, vor Tid gaar mere i Retning af *l'art pour Larsen*."

struggles to find meaning in the claustrophobic confines of petty bourgeois life. The term “Larsen” as a character type entered public imagination in 1935, when the experimental playwright Kjeld Abell made his debut with the stage play *The melody that got lost*.³²⁹ An instant success with the public as well as the critics, it told the story of Mr. Larsen, who had expected so much of life and yet ended working in an office like everybody else. Though ending on a positive note it spurned many discussions of the working conditions of white-collar workers. It also hit a note with its audience who were all too familiar with the disenchantment of adult life. Abell managed to combine a familiar and down-to-earth theme with the catchy tunes of his colleague Svend Møller Christensen and an innovative approach to theatre inspired by Bertolt Brecht and Jean Giraudoux. The play was soon translated into several languages and performed in many countries across Europe.³³⁰

Considering the unprecedented success of both Abell and Locher and their shared sympathy for the trials of the common man, Locher’s reference was not entirely amiss. It is important to note though, that there was an essential difference in their artistic treatment of the subject. While Locher aimed mainly at creating light distraction for the hard-working people, Abell aspired to change their way of thinking and challenge the mindless repetition of petty bourgeois rituals. For Abell there was a definite political subtext encouraging the single man to take an active stand. Locher also displayed sympathy for the common man, but in THF the contradictions of petty-bourgeois morals were mainly an occasion for comedy.

Thus the reference to Larsen kept Locher in good cultural company, but it also underlined the difference between Abell’s left-wing artistry and Locher’s conservative craftsmanship. In the 60th birthday interview Locher did not seem to mind this position as a skilled entertainer. The same image is recognizable in the reviews of his single

³²⁹ This is the official English title of the translation published in 1939. Locher also paraphrased it in the episode called *Nytaarsnumre* (New Year’s Tricks) from 31.12.1944, when talking about “the melody that never gets lost.”

³³⁰ Ravn, Ole: "Postscript" in: Abell, Kjeld (ed.): *Melodien der blev væk*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1986.

radio dramas from the years 1935-52.³³¹ Whether complimenting or criticising his dramatic production, the general focus is often on Locher's *skills* as opposed to *talent* or *genius*. Both Locher's supporters and critics agree almost unanimously that he knows his craft – and that it only truly came to fruition in THF. Words such as “routine(d)”, “effective”, “(automatic) precision” etc. are used across the board. Some times his craftsmanship is admired and at other times it is despised as merely good construction without depth or perspective.

His radio productions revolved around love, divorce, the generation gap, artistic challenges etc. Judging by the reviews, he mainly excelled in the dialogues but never quite managed to reach a higher, more philosophic level. A classic critique about a 10-minute play he did in 1950 read: “The lines delivered by the author as well as the actors were uncriticisable. Once more absolutely decent. It just isn't enough.”³³²

Locher's writings were never part of a lofty artistic agenda, but instead they were directly and deliberately appealing to the common man. In other words: A safe choice for the entertainment part of a programme in the theatre as well as on the radio, or on television as was seen in chapter 3.1. For decades Locher maintained a central position in the cultural circles of Copenhagen, but after his death in 1952, he slowly disappeared from cultural memory. Today, there is no biography or official bibliography. More importantly, his largest success THF has not survived in the shape of sound recordings, which might otherwise have kept him alive in the public imagination. Therefore I have tried to piece together some of the loose information available on his work and public life. The details of his private life on the other hand, will be left to his future biographer.

Born in 1889 as the fifth child of well renowned marine painter and professor Carl Locher, Jens grew up surrounded by the cultural elite of the turn of the century, including P.S. Krøyer and Holger Drachmann, associated with the artist group known as

³³¹ This impression and the following description is based on the collection of radio drama reviews of Locher's productions held at the DBC Archives. The extent of the period was determined by the 29 reviews in the collection, which cover nine of the 17 productions Locher is credited with in BD.

³³² “F.N.”, author unknown: *Høre-småspil. Mest for direktørfamilier*. Review in: *Social Demokraten* 06.02.1950. Original version: “Replikbehandlingen var både fra forfatterens og skuespillernes side udadledig. Helt igen i det nette. Det er bare ikke nok.”

“the Skagen painters”. Shortly after graduating from high school in 1907, he decided to become a journalist and went straight to editing a column at the left wing paper *København*. In 1911 he had his literary debut with a collection of short stories about a small community of fishermen from Skagen called *Nær salten Sø. Fra det gamle fiskerleje* (illustrated by his father).³³³ The six tales portrayed individual destinies as well as described the social laws embedded in the layout of the houses in the community, the linguistic expressions, the distinction between the minds of two “intellectuals” and the physical strength of the fishermen. At the core of the stories was a quest for equilibrium. In times of adversity the so-called “scientist” in the book intervenes and helps re-establish peace in the fishing community as *deus ex machina* from his house placed above the village. The fishermen possess neither the urge nor the ability to make real changes for themselves, they merely accept the fate they are given. A similar sense of status quo or even positive kind of conservatism is present in the episodic storytelling of THF.

The year after his literary debut, Locher married Helga Mentz, with whom he had two sons. They stayed married for the rest of his life and apparently led a happy life together. In 1916 he turned his interest towards another medium with the book *Hvorledes skriver man en film? (How to write a movie)*. After travelling in Paris and Greenland for a couple of years, he returned to Copenhagen, where he pursued a career in the conservative press³³⁴, working as a writer, editor of the annual satirical magazine *Svikmøllen*, and editor-in-chief at *B.T.* (1937-40). Alongside his work in the press, he continued to deliver comedic pieces for the Copenhagen theatre scene. According to an obituary notice by Povl Sabroe³³⁵, Locher was the go-to man for light comedies in the 1920s. Theatre directors counted on him to attract audiences and with the exception of a few flops, he did just that. Between his debut piece *Hausse* from 1918 and his final stage play *Tre maa man være* from 1952, he wrote more than 30 farces, light comedies, operettas, and revues, the bulk of which appeared in the 1920s and 30s. He even found

³³³ Locher, Jens: *Nær salten Sø. Fra det gamle Fiskerleje*, Kristiania, Copenhagen, 1911. The words “Nær salten Sø” are a possible reference to the line “Nær salten Østerstrand” in the Danish civic national anthem *Der er et yndigt land*, written by Adam Oehlenschläger in 1819.

³³⁴ According to *Den store danske encyclopædi*, he worked for *Nationaltidende*, *B.T.* and *Berlingske Tidende* - of which the first and the latter published the main articles contributing to this chapter about Locher.

³³⁵ Sabroe, Povl: “Jens Locher død i gaar” in: *Politiken*, 23.06.1952. P. 6.

the time to be the creative director of the film company *Nordisk Film* from 1927-28, until the company went bankrupt and reemerged in a different form.

Considering his experience from the press, the stage, and the film medium, the next transition seemed a natural one. In 1929 he unveiled his comedic “situations” *The Hansen Family* on the then four-year old institution the DBC. Whether he was approached with the assignment or he suggested it remains unclear, but in a short article from 1934, Locher pointed out that THF was not conceived as a long-running series. Sabroe (1952) attributed the development from a few installments into a weekly series to Locher’s “mercantile talent”, which corresponds with the general impression of Locher as a man of initiative. At least that is how he presented himself in the l’art pour Larsen interview. He claimed to have secured his first job at *København* by submitting a few articles and the position as creative director at *Nordisk Film* by approaching the director simply because he “had an idea”. In both cases he was not particularly familiar with the discipline in question. In short it is very likely that he wanted to branch out into radio drama after about ten years’ experience from the theatre. Early on, he saw the opportunities of the new medium as he explained in an article in 1929: “[...] this new form of multiplication attracts me because of its uniqueness and its immense possibilities.”³³⁶ Regardless how he found his way into radio production, it did not take long before THF became a success. As mentioned in chapter 3.1. the first installment of the “modern dialogues” or “comedic situations” as they were originally dubbed³³⁷, was broadcast in April, 1929. In the following months there were only a few further episodes, but by August it was a weekly event and continued with the same frequency for twenty years.³³⁸

During the long run of THF, Locher continued working as a journalist and and between 1935 and 1952 he had 13 single radio drama productions on the air; most of these received lukewarm reviews, remarking that Locher did not have the literary capacity to

³³⁶ Op.cit. Locher (21.09.1929). Original version: “[...] denne nye Form for Mangfoldiggørelse virker dragende ved sin Egenart og ved de uhyre Fremtidsmuligheder der ligger i den.”

³³⁷ Broadcast schedule in: *Politiken*, 02.04.1929.

³³⁸ With a few local exceptions and the summer breaks held in the years 1929-38 (usually including June, July and August), which separated the spring and autumn radio programmes. From 1939 and to the end there were neither Christmas nor summer breaks in the series. All of the above is based on information from BD (=Broadcast Dates from the DBC).

reach beyond the one-act-format that he excelled at in THF every week. In chapters 5.4. and 5.5., I will discuss these reviews in more detail and compare them to the public reception of THF. Suffice it to say that although Locher experimented with many different media formats, the general opinion that has since been canonised in reference works and media history, is that his main talent lay within the confines of THF. His precise renditions of everyday phraseology, general observations, quick wit and dedication to the depiction *of* the average man *for* the average man made him popular with a wide audience. It also earned him a comparison to the highly acclaimed Danish-Norwegian 18th century playwright Ludvig Holberg³³⁹, in a preface written by publisher Axel Garde for the 1944 publication of the THF manuscripts. The rather generous comparison to a man whose plays remain popular to this very day and whose sculpture flanks the entrance to the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen stirred a small discussion in the media. However, one poetic (and positive) response was printed in *Berlingske Tidende*³⁴⁰, accompanied by a drawing in which the exceptionally tall Locher passes a much smaller Holberg on the street. Holberg steps aside and lifts his hat to him, while Locher makes no gesture at all. The poem also had Holberg bow to the superior number of audiences that Locher's weekly plays entertained. Even if this praise may seem a little premature today, when Locher's work is all but lost from cultural memory, there are definite similarities in terms of linguistic details and the dynamics of the pompous male character and his often much cleverer female opponent. I will return to Locher's 1929 discussion of this constellation in chapter 5.5.

Another trait characteristic to Locher's style was his insistence on adding a topical angle to the THF-plots, tying the series closer to his own time (see more about this in chapter 5.4.). According to Sabroe (1952) this might have been a contributing factor to the fleeting success of THF, preventing it from reaching the status of a classic. At the same time I wish to argue that this very topicality, the historical embeddedness of the series, makes it an important (though fictional) historical source today.

³³⁹ To the foreign reader, Holberg's comedies are comparable to those of French 17th century playwright Molière. Furthermore, Holberg was a central figure in the Enlightenment in Denmark and was a Professor of metaphysics, rhetorics, and history at the University of Copenhagen.

³⁴⁰ Ærbødigt (pseudonym for journalist and author Viggo Barfoed): "Dagens Ærbødigt" in: *Berlingske Tidende*, 22.11.1944.

For the full period of THF, Locher was the sole author and when the series came to an end with the untimely death of Aage Schmidt, he saw it through by introducing the last episode himself. The same year, Locher turned 60 and was celebrated in his journalistic playgrounds at *Nationaltidende* and *Berlingske Tidende* with interviews and a complete hand-drawn edition of the satirical magazine *Svikmøllen*³⁴¹, which displays the respect and admiration of his colleagues. In one drawing Locher is depicted in a throne-like chair, surrounded by flowers and his peers holding up signs representing his many productions through the years. Along with the others, this drawing displays the reverence of his colleagues and younger associates:



A year later Locher won a novel competition with his surprisingly titled story *Fodboldpræsten* (The Soccer Vicar), about a newly ordained vicar who converts the local trouble makers by joining their soccer team and gaining their respect. It was adapted

³⁴¹ I have kindly been given a copy by Locher's granddaughter Hanne Locher, who is in possession of the original. It was created exclusively as a gift and therefore was never published.

into a film in 1951. He died in the summer of 1952 at the age of 63, leaving behind his wife Helga and their two sons, Jan and Niels.

4.5. Other Family Serials

In this short chapter I will mention a few serials akin to THF³⁴², either because of a similarity in the genre, the national imagery, the media institution or their more or less educational uses. I have limited the list to featuring mainly examples from the radio and in languages I understand, with a few exceptions where necessary, but with a focus on 1925-50. Even so, it is by no means comprehensive, but serves to show the wide application of the genre geographically and teleologically and in that sense complements the more theoretical discussion of the serial format in chapter 2.2. For this reason there will be some overlapping information, but since I wanted to make a general outline of the international family serial format, it could not be avoided completely.

When looking for possible inspirations for THF, the focus inevitably turns towards American broadcasting by a process of elimination. At the time of THF's hesitant launch in 1929, neither the British, Swedish or German broadcasters, with whom the DBC had most collaboration, had any similar serials on the air. Therefore the most likely sources of inspiration are the American serials of the 1920s and serialised fiction in the printed press. However, the only mention of exchange of series goes in the other direction. In then former Director-General Holm's memoirs, Holm humorously describes the puzzled German visitors who do not understand why the audience wants to hear the same comedic play *The Hansen Family* every week for several years.³⁴³ Returning to American serial drama, most of what is mentioned in the literature today stems from the period

³⁴² Thereby I am deliberately continuing the classic division between radio drama and radio serials referred to in chapter 2.2.2. So much of what I am focusing on in THF is inextricably linked to its seriality (topicality, everyday banal nationalism etc.), and therefore I have not found it very useful to include too many observations from single radio plays. Furthermore, since many of the early American serials moved between networks, I have chosen not to include the network names in their brackets to keep it simple. For the same reason, the timespan of the American serials is approximate, since the years might have been broken up due to a change from one network to the next, and from radio to television.

³⁴³ Op.cit. Holm (1939), p. 101.

after the national broadcasting corporations were formed in 1928/29, and any serials running on local broadcasters before that have all but disappeared today.³⁴⁴

One sitcom often mentioned as the first American radio series was *Amos 'n' Andy* (formerly: *Sam & Henry*), which ran from 1928-60. It was a sitcom recorded in front of a live laughing audience, stretching for 29 min including a commercial break and singing, featuring the adventures of two African-American farmworkers portrayed by two Caucasian actors. In terms of the style, characters, environment, and format, it has little to do with THF, although the humour in both cases often consisted of double entendre as well as social or racial stereotyping. Another series possibly preceding THF, was *The Smith Family* (1929-32), an early radio act featuring Marion of the vaudevillean couple Jim and Marion Jordan, who later rose to fame with their radio series *Fibber McGee & Molly* (1935-59). In many cases, the American serial dramas were based on existing skits from the stage or a local station, which were then imported by the NBC or CBS. THF also started as single sketches but the characters had no prehistory with the actors or the author and in that sense they were more of a gamble from the onset. Locher did, however, have plenty of experience writing light comedies for the stage as was mentioned in chapter 4.4.

Of the American ones more contemporary with THF, shows such as *The Rise of the Goldbergs* (1929-46), *One Man's Family* (1932-59), the aforementioned *Fibber McGee & Molly*, and *The Aldrich Family* (1939-53) are worth mentioning. Described as "assimilationist" by Hilmes (1997)³⁴⁵, *The Rise of the Goldbergs* by Gertrude Berg was a comedic drama about a Jewish family living in the Bronx. In spite of its very specific location and frequent references to Jewish culture, it also reflected more general issues of social interaction, family life, and the challenges of modern living. While THF more or less remained a weekly night time show of 15 mins for 20 years, *The Rise of the Goldbergs* & *One Man's Family* started out as weekly night time shows of 30 mins and went on to become daily daytime shows of 15 mins, as did many other serials in the mid 1930s.³⁴⁶ The more serious family serial *One Man's Family* by Carlton E. Morse, followed

³⁴⁴ I thank Michele Hilmes for pointing this out to me in a private correspondence from 2011.

³⁴⁵ Op.cit. Hilmes (1997), p. xviii.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 151.

Mr and Mrs Barbour in their family life from parenthood and into grandparenthood. It had a more literary style with detailed dialogue and an ever expanding family tree, consisting of much more detailed characters than THF, and a clearly developing storyline across episodes. The witty dialogue between husband and wife as was seen in THF, was also used extensively in the sitcom *Fibber McGee & Molly*, which blended running gags, interaction with the announcer and singing into light entertainment. *The Aldrich Family* was more of a teenage sitcom with the parents Sam and Alice and their slightly dim and awkward teenage son Henry taking center stage. The main characters never age, which was also partly the case in THF, where it is mainly the twins who grow older at an unpredictable pace. While *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Rise of the Goldbergs* portrayed and, to a varying degree, ridiculed ethnic minorities, the likes of *One Man's Family*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and *The Aldrich Family* depicted the typically American family or couple.³⁴⁷ Most of the serials had running storylines, though some were more complex than others.

Moving across the pond, the first British soap, *Front Line Family* (BBC, 1941-48), which I have already mentioned on several occasions, was written by Mabel Constanduros. The idea was to show the trials and tribulations of an ordinary family, fighting to maintain their everyday life in the face of crisis. After the war it was moved to the BBC's *Light Programme*, where it became known as *The Robinson Family* and was followed by *Mrs Dale's Diary* (BBC, 1948-69). Earlier examples of domestic series include the today lesser known Constanduros success, *The Buggins Family* (BBC, 1925-48/early 1950s), and *The Plums* (BBC, 1937-?).³⁴⁸ *Front Line Family*, shares some similarities with THF in terms of its everyday focus and the national imagery inherent in the concept, while *Mrs Dale's Diary* had a more intimate dimension to it, with its "diary"-format that allowed for more contemplative inner monologues. As concerns the Northern European serials, there was the portrait of "Finnish national identity" *Familjen Suominen* (Yleisradio, 1938), followed by the more working class portrait in *The Worker's Family* (Yleisradio, 1948-51) and in Norway there were attempts at a similar serial, but, as mentioned in chapter 2.2.1., the confiscation of all radio receivers during the German occupation put

³⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 21.

³⁴⁸ Op.cit. Hendy (2003).

an end to them.³⁴⁹ *Ingenjör Björck med familj* has received some academic attention and is therefore described more adequately.³⁵⁰ In many respects this serial about an engineer and his family was very similar to THF, both in the focus on the domestic dialogues and themes, the blend of comedy and information, as well as the nature of the relationship between Mr and Mrs Björck.

It is important to note the difference between the American serials appearing on commercial broadcasting stations and the British and European ones appearing on public service channels. The main difference lay in the broadcasting circumstances, rather than in the actual storylines and characters. In an American context, the commercial approach often entailed commercial introductions and - breaks, as well as a tradition for using more singing and in some instances live audiences. Furthermore, it seems that the distinction between daytime and night time drama was much more embedded in cultural political debates on high and low culture than was the case in Denmark and even Britain, where they offered the entertainment programmes on a separate channel, the *Light Programme*, after WWII. In Denmark there was no channel for lighter programmes until the introduction of the *Third Programme* (P3) in 1963, aimed at catering to a youth hungry for pop and rock.

Before reaching the end of this short comparison to other family serials, I want to make a brief point about the THF-heritage in Danish media history. While Björck examined 23 family serial dramas from Swedish broadcasting history, there has only been one successor to THF on the DBC: *Karlsens Kvarter* (*Karlsen's Fifteen Minutes*, DBC, 1967-84). Portrayed by the real-life couple Lise Ringheim and Henning Moritzen, Bitten and Per Karlsen was a middle-aged couple living in a suburb of Copenhagen with their three children. Though obviously indebted to THF, this serial had a much-updated tone, often dominated by political sarcasm and social irony and a very lively dialogue, to which the children happily contributed. Compared to THF it had the same power of observation, the same talent for spotting phenomena characteristic of its time and deconstructing them in a witty turn of events. Episodes such as the one concerning new workout

³⁴⁹ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 39.

³⁵⁰ See: Nordmark, Dag: *Finrummet och lekstugan, kultur- och underhållningsprogram i svensk radio och TV*, Prisma, Stockholm, 1999. Pp. 78-85. AND Björck (2010).

machines, or a new diet regimen for Per echo storylines from THF. Again, it is the wife, who often has the last word and the husband who is constantly preoccupied by idiomatic schemes. One of the recurring scriptwriters was Lise Nørgaard, who later wrote the canonical television series *Matador* (DBC, 1978-82) broadcast on the DBC and re-aired regularly ever since. Incidentally, the TV-series was about the entangled lives of the two families Varnæs and Skjern in a provincial town south of Copenhagen, and the action was set in 1929-45, almost the very years when THF was aired on the radio. Therefore there are many overlapping references to the likes of *Captain Jespersen*³⁵¹, searching for good house help, the German occupation, the Spanish Civil War etc. Because of the provincial setting, most of the historical events of the period took place at a considerable distance, and yet the changing fashions, political observations, and artistic movements made their way into the doiled living rooms of the families somehow. Hence, there are similar acts of re-proportioning at play in *Matador* as in THF, but the extensive list of characters involved in the portrait of the town allowed for a much more dynamic and open treatment of current events than in THF. Even so, it is an example of how THF has been influential in the shaping of the serial format in Danish broadcasting.

5. The Phenomenon

Now that the historical, institutional, biographical, and “serial” contexts have been established (chapter 4), I wish to turn my attention to the series at the centre of it all: *The Hansen Family*. My approach in this section is divided into two parts, of which the first is an analysis of the series as a whole phenomenon (chapter 5), and the second is a close reading, focusing on how current events are transformed in the narrative universe of the single episodes (chapter 6). Although the latter is the more important part of my analysis, I have found that close reading alone does not explain THF’s status as an

³⁵¹ See chapter 4.2.

immensely successful cultural institution, its social and mediated reality, or - the series as a production spanning twenty years and 914 episodes. These are the aspects I will be covering in the course of the next five sub-chapters. Opening with details about the production of the series, I will move on to considering the aural adaptation of the manuscripts based on the few surviving recordings of THF. Subsequently, I will present an analysis of the general tendencies in the years selected from the THF manuscript collection (1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49) and discuss developments over the twenty-year period. Finally, the last two sub-chapters are dedicated to the public reception of THF in its own time, and the afterlife of the series in Danish media history respectively.

5.1. Early Radio Drama Production

As is probably clear by now, the analyses and observations in the current thesis are primarily based on textual material: reviews, memoirs, and manuscripts. Therefore I have chosen to balance the textual preponderance with a consideration for the mediated reality of THF - that is, pointing to the many stages and people that came between Locher's written vision and the broadcast that finally reached the audience. Yet, as the sources to this side of the THF reality are rather scarce, I have not been able to properly investigate the process. Instead I have chosen to present a few points of particular interest to my research in this chapter, based on interviews, manuscripts, and articles about THF and radio drama production in general. In the next chapter (5.2.) I will make a comparative analysis of the few surviving recordings and their manuscripts to reach some general conclusions about the transmutation from text to sound. Together, these two chapters (5.1. and 5.2.) are a reminder of the mediated nature of THF and represent one way of dealing with the scarcity of recorded programmes from early radio history.³⁵²

³⁵² This issue of absent material is a common occurrence within media historical research. E.g. Jason Jacobs discussed it in relation to early British television drama in: Jacobs, Jason: *The intimate screen: early British television drama*, Clarendon, Oxford, 2000. Furthermore, the challenges were addressed several times at the recent LARM Conference on *Digital Archives, Audiovisual Media and Cultural Memory* in Copenhagen, 14-15 November 2013.

Radio drama production in the 1930s and 40s

Although it is impossible to tell exactly which parts were also true for the production of THF, House Director at the DBC Bang's description of the radio drama production process may serve as an impression of the general conditions at the time.³⁵³ The photograph below was featured alongside Bang's 1934 article *Naar et Hørespil bliver til* (When a radio play comes to life).³⁵⁴ He was also Drama Consultant at the DBC at the time and is pictured as the shadow behind the window in the back of the photograph, while Stage Director Knud Schrøder is ready with the sound effects on the front right. The rest of the people in the photograph are actors practicing for a live drama broadcast.



In the article Bang traces the many steps from the first manuscript draft to the final broadcast, stressing the amount of work and skill invested in the process:

³⁵³ Bang might even have worked as the director of THF during the last years. When actor Aage Schmidt died in September 1949, Bang was mentioned along with Locher and Managing Director of the DBC Jensen in an article about the canceling of the series. *Aarhus Stiftstidende*, 14.09.1949.

³⁵⁴ Bang, Oluf: "Naar et Hørespil bliver til" in: *Radiolytteren*, 08.04.1934.

A reading, a microphone rehearsal with a detailed run-through of lines and situations with repetition upon repetition - just like in the theatre - including a rehearsal with the choir and extras, rehearsals with sound effects, sometimes even an orchestra. If anyone thinks a couple of talented actors reading from a book in front of a microphone will suffice, he is sorely mistaken.³⁵⁵

However, since THF was a weekly show that lasted only fifteen minutes in comparison to the much longer single plays, the production would have been much less time-consuming. In fact, serials such as THF are known to have been used as a cost effective way of filling radio schedules and meeting the growing demands of listeners in the early years of American broadcasting. Hence, Hendy (2003), among others, describes some of the radio soap productions as veritable factories:

It is in the radio "soap opera" that we see most clearly the first application of mass-production techniques to simple recording practice, the beginnings of a broadcast form which embodied not the free expression of the single creative artist but the application of industrial methods - assembly lines, routines, fast throughput and so on.³⁵⁶

While this may have been true in an American context, the situation in a national public service institution such as the DBC was a little different. As mentioned in chapter 3.1. THF had many similarities with the American soap tradition. However, the THF-production seems to have been a combination of the Fordist vision above and a regular radio drama production. Locher was the primary creative "artist", or craftsman, behind the series and the content is very much in line with the rest of his work, which I presented in chapter 4.4. On the other hand, as also mentioned Locher was not above recycling his material across different media outlets in a way we might describe as a kind of "multi-platform marketing" today. During the 1940s, he also started recycling his older episodes regularly, making sure to update any historically specific references in the text.³⁵⁷ Finally, it seems that Locher did not contribute any further to the production than simply delivering the manuscript. In that sense though, hardly any radio dramas are what Hendy refers to as "the free expression of the single creative

³⁵⁵ Ibid. Original version: "Læseprøve, Mikrofonprøve med detailleret Gennemgang af Replikker og Situationer, med Gentagelse paa Gentagelse - lige som paa et Teater - med Kor og Statistprøve, prøver med Lydkulisser, eventuelt med Orkester. Hvis nogen tror, at det er gjort med, at et Par dygtige Skuespillere stiller sig hen ved en Mikrofon og læser op af Bøgerne, tror han grundigt fejl."

³⁵⁶ Op.cit. Hendy (2003), p. 8.

³⁵⁷ See chapter 6.2.7.

artist”, since so many different employees were, and still are, involved in any single drama production. One thing that does point to Locher as the single man behind THF is the fact that there were quite a few continuity errors in the beginning of its run. Had it been produced in a factory-manner, the continuity would have been looked after by a person hired for the same purpose. Instead, Locher was forced to address the many complaints he had from listeners in 1934, who were irked by how he had forgotten about the Hansen’s first son.³⁵⁸ Locher explained the mistake by saying that their son was from the time before The Hansen Family became *The Hansen Family* and the episodes were still written as unconnected mini-sketches. Interestingly this implicit distinction between single sketches and the serial format implies that Locher eventually became more focused on maintaining continuity.

In a radio interview³⁵⁹, Knud Schrøder shared stories from his many years at the DBC. One of them was a selection of memories from when he was the Director of THF. Sadly, very few of his observations are connected to a specific year, which makes it difficult to know for how long a particular practice continued. However, what he does mention is the crucial detail that Ellen Røvsing (the actress portraying Gerda) and Aage Schmidt (the actor portraying Aage) always adapted Locher’s lines quite freely to suit their characters. Locher apparently did not mind this, since he once told Schrøder that he never listened to THF. This description of an arm’s-length approach is supported by Locher’s niece, Hanne Locher, who remembers that he did not take part in the production, but simply sent his handwritten manuscript to a typing bureau and from there on to the DBC.³⁶⁰ Stepping back from this historical account for a moment, these details are exactly the reason the comparative analysis of sound recordings and manuscripts in chapter 5.2. is necessary - to point out what kind of departures from and interpretations of the original manuscript might have been made. It is a reminder to use written radio manuscripts with caution and to treat them as what they often are: the much earlier stage of a production than what reached the listeners in the end. Again, this is a point I will be exploring in chapter 5.2.

³⁵⁸ Locher, Jens: “Familien Hansen” in: *Radiolytteren*, 06.05.1934.

³⁵⁹ *Fra radioens tidlige år* (containing interview with Knud Schrøder): Broadcast on DBC P3. Date unknown but probably between March and May 1970. Link to the LARM archive: <http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=543ce0e3-6536-4898-ae5-008c8f6aac7b>

³⁶⁰ Private conversation with Hanne Locher 14.10.2012.

Returning to early radio drama production, another detail of interest to my THF analysis regards Schrøder's casting. He remembers working with several sets of twins, because the actors grew faster than the characters (at least aurally speaking). Working mainly with episodes from every five years of the production as I have chosen to do, it can be difficult to ascertain from the manuscripts whether, or at which rate, the characters age in the narrative universe. The twins certainly age from being mere toddlers to taking part in the dialogue of the series. On the other hand, Å & G age much less distinctively with nary a reference to their birthdays. Therefore it is interesting that so many actors apparently outgrew the parts of the twins since it indicates a discrepancy between narrative time and real-time, and the whole idea of having a weekly serial with topical references is based on the correlation of those very time axes. Though not very surprising, it once more highlights the oddity of the different timelines in THF, according to which characters hardly age, while the world around them changes at regular speed. This again is related to the point I have made before about the conservatism of the circular, or, episodic narrative universe of THF.

As concerns the manuscript, actor Schmidt revealed in a newspaper interview from 1943³⁶¹ that Locher wrote the episodes 3 to 4 weeks in advance. Having to write an episode several weeks ahead of broadcasting would have influenced the degree of topicality considerably. Locher would have had to rely on his ability to foresee developments or focus on already scheduled events. This point is particularly relevant to my re-proportioning analyses in chapter 6, where I will be looking at the ways in which then current events were reinterpreted or "re-proportioned" in the THF universe. The early manuscript deadline could be one explanation for the category called "commissions"³⁶² which refers to THF-storylines that might have been the results of governmental commissions to Locher. By this I mean that building an episode on a scheduled real-life event a couple of weeks before the fact was one way of securing topicality in his serial. The production process of THF could also explain some of the more passing references to recent issues, i.e. the re-proportioning category I have named "specifics".³⁶³ Without making fundamental changes to the story or dialogue, the

³⁶¹ Unknown author: "Radioens elskede Hansen tilbage" in: *Ekstrabladet*, 09.12.1943.

³⁶² See chapters 6.1. and 6.2.

³⁶³ See chapters 6.1. and 6.2.

specifics present a way of casually adding touches of topicality at an advanced stage in the production process, possibly even as part of the cast's own free adaptation.

Apart from mere production related practicalities, there might have been another, much more serious reason for the early deadline referred to in 1943. While neither Schmidt nor Schrøder mentions German censorship, there were five examples of notes in the DBC manuscripts from the summer of 1944³⁶⁴ showing that the episode had been made available for "censoring/control listening". As mentioned before, at this point in time the DBC had fallen entirely under German control after having been under self-censorship monitored by the Press Bureau of the Foreign Office until 29 August 1943. Even so, this practice would not have been entirely unfamiliar to Locher, as signatures on some of the earlier manuscripts indicate that they have been read and approved by Director-General Holm among others.³⁶⁵ In another article from 1934³⁶⁶, this time about the future of radio drama, scriptwriter Otto Rung described the long approval process for single radio plays: "From me the manuscript moves on to Stage Director Oluf Bang and then to Programme Director chamber singer Holm, by whom the final decision *in all matters* is made."³⁶⁷ A similar observation was made in an article by Programme Director Werner in 1940³⁶⁸, where he described Holm as someone who wanted to be involved in every single part of production during his reign (1925-37): "After all, he [Holm] was used to doing most of the work himself, and used to getting credit as well as critique for everything that did or did not happen."³⁶⁹ Furthermore, as mentioned above, several THF manuscripts from 1934 have "Ja EH" written on the cover, which is a further indication that he was still approving Locher's work five years into the

³⁶⁴ The dates in question were: 29.05, 02.07, 06.08, 13.08, and 20.08.1944. Since the information was written on separate notes tucked into the manuscripts, it is very likely that there were originally more of them.

³⁶⁵ When present, the vast majority of signatures on the covers from 1934 read "Ja EH" (= "yes EH", probably referring to Emil Holm as it also resembles his handwriting), while signatures from the other four years I have focused on seem to be from directors or other people directly involved with the production.

³⁶⁶ Op.cit. Rung (1934), pp. 6 & 37.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 6. Original version: "Fra mig gaar Manuskriptet til Sceneinstruktør *Oluf Bang* og dernæst til Driftslederen *Kammersanger Holm*, af hvem den endelige Afgørelse *i alle Ting* træffes."

³⁶⁸ Werner, Hans: "Et Kig ind mellem Kulisserne" in: Breidahl, Axel and Rée, Knud (eds.): *Danmarks Radio - Den danske statsradiofoni gennem 15 aar (Vol. 1)*, Chr. Erichsens Forlag, Copenhagen, 1940, (DBC15). Pp. 150-178.

³⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 162. Original version: "Han var jo vant til at gøre det meste af Arbejdet selv, og vant til baade at faa Æren og Kløene for alt, hvad der skete eller ikke skete."

production. After Holm left in 1937, the all-encompassing position of Director-General was turned into an administrative position filled by the new Managing Director, F.E. Jensen (1937-61) and a cultural production divided into three departments: Music (Peder Gram), Drama and Literature (Hans Werner), and Lectures (Jens Rosenkjær). I have found no documents describing Werner's particular approach to THF, but since the series had already been running successfully for eight years when he was appointed Programme Director, it is not unlikely that he would have let it continue on its own without interruption until the end of his own time at the DBC in 1949.

Conclusion

In many ways it would have been preferable to have more recorded material from the THF years on which to base this and the following chapter.³⁷⁰ However, since this is simply not available today, I have found the above observations concerning the conditions of early radio drama production and its effects on matters of continuity and topicality valuable. Exaggerated as it may be, the distinction between production as an assembly line on the one hand and THF as the product of a single creative mind on the other has important consequences for the continuity of characters and events. At the same time, the American model for commercial broadcasting seems to have influenced Locher's visions for THF and its multiform uses across platforms. The fact that Locher recycled many of his episodes in the later years also points to THF as a formulaic and episodic series rather than a more naturally progressing narrative. For this reason, the concept of "re-proportioning" and in particular the sub-categories of "specifics" and "commissions" become crucial to the maintenance of a topical nerve in the series, as both offer ways of doing so even with recycled material or in the case of early manuscript deadlines. For this reason, the knowledge that the actors had considerable freedom to interpret Locher's lines according to their characters is also very valuable.

³⁷⁰ At the aforementioned LARM Conference from November 2013, I presented the argument that instead of lamenting the absence of early media historical recordings, we might want to reconsider our perception of the "original" programme. Instead I suggested that we see the recording for what it was, namely just one point in a long line between production, transmission, and reception, which other sources might also help to illuminate. Furthermore, I see the manuscript as an equally valuable source to the programme as will also be apparent in my thesis as a whole. Finally, the manuscripts as well as the reception in text or other form reveal details about the intended and actual mediated reality of the text, in the shape of stage notes and technical guidelines etc. I will return to this point in chapter 5.3.

As we shall see in chapter 5.3. the THF production expanded over the years to include further actors, both regular and singular, and at times more elaborate technical mise-en-scène. However, first it is time to look closer at the only complete episodes and one fragment kept as recordings from the original *The Hansen Family*.

5.2. Listening to Rare Voices

In the following I will extract some central points about the *spoken* language and general aural adaptation of the THF-manuscripts based on the texts and the only 2,5 original recordings of THF.³⁷¹ First I will look at the fragment and subsequently I will present the two complete episodes together in order to compare and contrast them. This will give an impression of the kind of transformations that took place before the episodes reached the audience. The analysis should therefore be seen as a general aural framing of the content analysis in chapter 6. By including these scant recordings I wish to take as much of the broadcast reality into consideration as possible, thus turning mere textual analysis into radio analysis. However, I will not be covering every minute of the recordings but only the details that highlight the difference between text and sound. To that end I will be using a few of Erik Møller's (1991)³⁷² basic terms for describing spoken language.

Untitled fragment, 28.01.1934 (?)³⁷³

Duration: 2:41 min.

Story: *A free ticket to a stage production of Orpheus spurns a discussion about the cultural consumption of the masses vs. more highbrow drama between Å & G.*

³⁷¹ I have deliberately omitted the amateur recording listed in chapter 3.2. since it was not part of the original series and its origins, purpose, and possible dissemination remain uncertain.

³⁷² Møller, Erik: "Lad talesproget komme til orde!" in: Hansen, Erik, Petersen, Inge L. and Poulsen, Ib (eds.): *Auditorium X, dansk før, nu - og i fremtiden?, en antologi om moderne sprogforskning*, Amanda, Copenhagen, 1991. Pp. 181-205.

³⁷³ This fragment is undated at the DBC, though contributed to 1948 in larm.fm. However the fact that the M-i-l is mentioned by the speaker, dates it to 1945 at the latest, since that is when the actress Olivia Norrie portraying her died. After that, many of her lines were transferred to Gerda's sister Ellen in reruns of old episodes. I discovered that the excerpt stems from a manuscript (possibly) first written on 28.01.1934, though I cannot say that for sure since I have not read all episodes between 1929 and 1934. I arrived at the date (which was not written on the manuscript) by comparing the episode no. on the manuscript at the DBC (no. 167) to information from the White Programmes (WP).

Even though the fragment is close to three minutes long, the initial tolling of the town hall bells in Copenhagen and the introductory speak only leave time for two pages of dialogue. However, none of these features appear in the manuscript, which makes it a unique example of the original radiophonic framing of THF. The first 52 seconds are spent on the customary tolling of the bells of the City Hall in Copenhagen, indicating that the episode was broadcast at 8pm that day. The recording is full of crackling noise, but the opening speak can be heard. It is delivered in a male voice and informs the listener that the broadcast is brought to the audience by Copenhagen-Kalundborg and Danish shortwave transmission. The speaker proceeds to introduce the play by name and author, the cast, the location and sets the situation at the beginning of the episode: "The action takes place in the Hansen home. The married couple in conversation."³⁷⁴ Even though the serial was already a big success at this point (1934), the speaker still explains that the M-i-l is G's mother instead of taking that information for granted. This shows an interest in also making newcomers to the series feel informed and welcome. After a few seconds, Å's voice is heard from a distance and grows closer as he enters the Hansen home, announcing his arrival. A small technical detail, which has the effect of slowly fading into the action while indicating the three-dimensional space inhabited by the characters. This opening line contains the kind of expository details characteristic of early or very conventional radio drama: "Hello Gerda. Here I finally am. Yes, there was extra work at the office, so I was not able to come home in time for dinner, but I already told you that on the phone."³⁷⁵ The final remark "I already told you that on the phone" makes all of the preceding information redundant in the fictional world. For one, it will be very obvious to G that Å is home again as her voice sounds quite close to his from the very beginning. Furthermore he is mainly repeating to her what he told her earlier. Both strands are there mainly to help the listener understand the setting and might as well have been added to the speaker intro instead. That this kind of narrative redundancy is characteristic of radio drama was also noted by Shingler and Wieringa (1998), who saw it as a result of the need for repetition created by the ephemeral nature of the radio medium. Because radio drama exists mainly in time and sound,

³⁷⁴ Op.cit. Untitled Sound Fragment (28.01.1934). Original version: "Handlingen foregaar i det hansenske hjem. Ægteparret i samtale."

³⁷⁵ Locher, Jens: Untitled episode, 28.01.1934 (my dating - no date on original). Manuscript from the DBC Archives. P. 3. Original version: "Goddag Gerda. Her har du mig endelig. Ja, der var Ekstraarbejde paa Kontoret, saa jeg naaede ikke at komme hjem til Middagen, men det sagde jeg dig jo i Telefonen."

[...] key events need to be repeated or referred back to in order to keep them alive in the minds of the audience. [...] Such a strategy would mean that much of the information being conveyed in a radio drama is actually redundant [...]³⁷⁶

Since Å is not repeating something the audience already knows, the details about his delay at the office are presumably also examples of narrative economy, according to which events that took place prior to the time of the episode are described rather than acted out. However, expositional dialogue relating already known details of past events or other such seemingly redundant information within the narrative is far from exclusive to the radio medium. Similarly expositional or redundant dialogue abounds in televised medical dramas today, where doctors explain medical terminology to each other mainly to make sure the audience is able to follow the narrative. Another kind of exposition relates details about the situation, which are hidden to the listeners³⁷⁷ due to the “blindness” of radio, which I discussed in chapter 2.1. Usually, the exposition includes description of objects or introduction of a new character to a scene, as well as description of what Møller calls “parallel language”³⁷⁸: facial expressions, gestures, and personal appearance. None of these traits are particular to THF, rather they are general features of radio drama, and were especially, though not exclusively, used in the early years of radio, when producers were still grappling with the genre. Å’s opening line “here I finally am” is an example of this compensation for blindness. His statement may be obvious to G, but it is not obvious to the audience. To them, he might just as well be in another country until G replies and connects his physical presence to the Hansen home.

For the most part, Locher seems to have been attentive to the intricacies of spoken language, though he did write rather “literary” and long sentences in some of the monologues. This becomes clear in the amateur recording, where the speakers stumble over the words and lose their breath, as they do not know the technique to properly

³⁷⁶ Op, cit. Shingler and Wieringa (1998), p. 82.

³⁷⁷ In my Master’s thesis about two radio crime fiction productions, I mentioned a humorous take on this “redundancy”. In the series *Blodets Bånd* (2005), two young officers enter a police station saying “Yes, here we are”, whereupon an older officer at the station replies “Does the idiot think I’m blind?” (my translation) in Svømmekjær, Heidi: *Mord i hovedet. En undersøgelse af den danske radiokrimi*. Master’s thesis from the University of Copenhagen, 2006. P. 56. The thesis is available online: http://radioteater.dk/materiale/Mord_i_hovedet.pdf

³⁷⁸ Op.cit. Møller (1991), p. 185.

adapt the lines to emulate spoken language. The same problems can be heard in the way the supporting actors from the two complete episodes (the nocturnal intruder and the butcher) deliver their lines, as we shall see shortly.

As concerns the sound fragment, actors Schmidt (Å) and Røvsing (G) stay true to the manuscript to a surprising degree. When there are alterations, they are small changes to the syntax and extended pauses rather than major changes to the text. One important feature of their adaptation style is the extensive use of so-called “gambit”. This, according to Møller, is a collective term for the linguistic strategies involved with managing a conversation and negotiating the right to speak, without adding actual linguistic content. In this particular fragment from THF, it translates as the words used by G in particular to let Å know that she is listening (“yes, yes” and “really?”). That Røvsing (G) chooses to make use of this strategy here is not surprising, since Schmidt has the longest lines among them. By breaking them up, she manages to maintain the dynamics of the dialogue, which might otherwise become unnatural. In a radio context this strategy has the further, and very important, task of letting the audience know that G is still present in the room, even if she is not speaking at the moment. This recalls Arnheim’s point from chapter 2.1.2. that “only the person who is speaking exists acoustically”, and therefore their existence must be reaffirmed continuously. In a larger perspective, details like these display the actors’ awareness of the intricacies of spoken language in its everyday shape. Along with the lightness of Locher’s dialogues and the precision of his linguistic observations these traits might explain the fact that Bomholt chose to highlight THF, in spite of its light and popular nature, as “truly radiophonic” (chapter 2.1.2.). Apart from these details of the actors’ adaptation, the recording contains no sound effects or bustle from movements accompanying the dialogue, which indicates a rather static reading of the manuscript.

One last observation in the fragment is a somewhat surprising shift in G’s approach to *Orpheus*, which only becomes clear when hearing Røvsing’s interpretation of the line: “Really? Is it Orpheus!”³⁷⁹ The episode is about the cultural consumption of the masses leaning towards lighter comedies and uplifting plays, while G is interested in more

³⁷⁹ Op.cit. Locher (28.01.1934), p. 3. Original version: “Nej da, er det Orfeus!”

serious drama. Two lines after the above quotation, G makes a derogatory remark about *Orpheus*, which sparks their discussion: “Yes, people will go for things like that!”³⁸⁰ Therefore it is quite surprising to hear Røvsing interpret the first line without a hint of irony and instead what seems to be honest excitement. I shall not begin speculating about why she chose to take her interpretation in that direction, but only say that it is an important reminder of the power of oral interpretation. It can change the entire meaning of a line merely by delivery and without changing the textual content as was seen in the Mae West example mentioned in chapter 2.2.3.

The two complete episodes:

***Nocturnal Hero*, 21.06.1942³⁸¹**

Duration: 11:52 min.

Story: *In the middle of the night an unknown man enters his former apartment, where Å & G now live, and Å mistakes him for a burglar. G faints and while she is unconscious, Å clears up the misunderstanding with the man (called Bernhard Hansen, an insurance agent who has been away on business). Not knowing what happened, G declares Å her hero, when she regains consciousness.*

***Idleness*, 01.10.1949³⁸²**

Duration: 15:07 mins.

Story: *Å & G are called on by butcher Madsen, who wants Å to feign financial loss on a bad investment. This way Mrs Madsen will want to return to work, and they can leave behind*

³⁸⁰ Ibid. Original version: “Ja, saadan noget det løber Folk jo efter!”

³⁸¹ Locher, Jens: *Natlig Helt* (Nocturnal Hero), 21.06.1942 (rehearsal (?) date written on the cover). Manuscript from the DBC Archives. For this analysis I have used the manuscript from 1942, since it corresponds with the date given to the recording in larm.fm. The same episode was also used earlier with the title *Far er jo hos dig* (Daddy's here with you) on 28.04.1935. Still, the fact that the text-version from 1942 ends with the words “far er jo hos dig” as well as the absence of any topical references make it very likely that the text was not changed between the two versions.

³⁸² Original titles: *Penge er roden til alt ondt* (Money is the Source of all Evil), (18.02.1940) and re-aired with the title *Lediggang* (Idleness), 01.10.1949 (broadcast date). As for the manuscript used for this analysis: Locher, Jens: *Lediggang* (Idleness), 12.09.1949 (rehearsal date written on the cover). Manuscript from the DBC Archives.

their unsuccessful stint as wealthy, but much too idle pensioners. Towards the end G even manages to fool Mr Madsen into thinking he is poor and charges him extra for that service.

Having a complete episode at one's disposal makes it possible to observe the voices and the scenography in a larger narrative context. As concerns the voices of Å & G, both sound appropriately mature for their age, considering the fact that G would be about 39 in 1942 if she aged apace with the series. However, it is hard to judge the characters' age and social backgrounds some 70 years later, as the language and status of a married couple have changed considerably since then. The immediate impression from G's voice is of a sensible woman of firm character, but also of a person who takes easily to laughter. She speaks Danish without any audible dialect, whereas Å has traces of a Copenhagen dialect (he pronounces "hvad er det" as "va ær 'ed") among his otherwise quite regular if not high-Danish pronunciation. Å sounds like a man in his mid 40s (which is the case), of regular height, robustly built, but not necessarily unhealthy. The nocturnal intruder Bernhard sounds authoritarian since he thinks, he has caught a strange man sleeping with his wife (he thinks he is in his own apartment).

As far as I can tell from my historical vantage point, Å & G's pronunciation places both of them in the middle class, clearly differentiated from representatives of the working class, such as the butcher who appears in *Idleness* and similar to the insurance agent Bernhard in *Nocturnal Hero*. Schmidt portrayed Å as having a tendency to speak in a slightly stuttering and repetitive way ("erh, erh" and "I'm counting, I'm counting"), as if to add further naturalism to his speech in places where he is unsure about what is going on. While this trick is employed with delicacy in *Idleness*, he almost over-uses it in *Nocturnal Hero* as if to emphasise his unease with the situation. It lends him a general air of insecurity, and indeed he is quite nervous according to the stage directions as well as to Schmidt's performance. It is also worth noting that the butcher and the intruder, who are single-episode characters, are both quite true to the wording in the manuscript, whereas Røvsing and especially Schmidt take more liberties. This may very well be a result of the production process according to which they would have had more time to rehearse and get into character than any of the changing cast. It may also be indicative of the butcher's and the intruder's secondary positions in the drama in the sense that their characters are merely stepping stones designed to bring out a certain quality in or

reaction from Å & G. The method of using gambit in the shape of interjections during the other one's lines is also used in *Idleness*, where the butcher has many long monologues. Yet - he is allowed to speak quite a lot without interruptions towards the end, which has a somewhat stifling effect on the episode. As if to counteract this "heaviness", G is very cheerful throughout, Røvsing delivering almost every one of her lines with a smile in her voice and using giggles to keep G present in the minds of the audience.

Compared to the fragment, the dynamics of *Nocturnal Hero* is quite different. The lines are distributed more evenly in the scenes featuring Å & G, and generally the three characters seem frantic due to the unusual nocturnal occurrence. The lines of Å & G have been adapted more freely than was the case in the fragment, often omitting whole sentences and rephrasing others. This may be because the recording is from 1942, when Røvsing and Schmidt had become even more accustomed to working with their characters, Locher's texts, and the radio medium. During Å's conversation with Bernhard, Schmidt makes use of gambit such as "yes, yes" and "uh huh" quite frequently to break up Bernhard's long lines. Throughout, the delivery of the lines, particularly those of Å & G, is stuttering, and overlapping one another, creating a sense of urgency and suspense. These features are by no means as pronounced in the manuscript as they are in the recording, so it is a unique opportunity to see the talents of Røvsing and Schmidt at work as well as to understand why their characters seemed so relatable to the audience. The anxiety at the beginning and the relief towards the end are both quite contagious even when listening to the episode today.

As for the sound "design", *Nocturnal Hero* is also weighed down by much crackling noise, which disguises some of the sound effects mentioned in the stage directions (e.g. a key in the door). However, it is possible to hear, as if alongside Å & G in their beds, the startling noises of Bernhard stumbling around in the dark living room. Furthermore, there is more depth to the portrayal of space, achieved through the alternation between the intimate whispers of Å & G in their bedroom (close to the microphone), the distant noises of the intruder, and the impression of different ambiances on top of voices and sounds.

A final detail worth highlighting in *Nocturnal Hero* is the fact that the audience remains “blinded” along with Å and Bernhard as long as the light is still out in the living room.³⁸³ This is made clear when at one point Å demands that Bernhard put his hands up and he replies that he cannot lift them any higher. Then, when the light is switched on, the audience is treated to some comedic “parallel language” in Møller’s sense, with Bernhard’s remark: “So that’s what you look like! [Ha!] And you’re in your pyjamas!”³⁸⁴ This vision further serves to undermine Å’s status in their conversation and to incriminate Å as the clandestine lover of Bernhard’s wife, until he realises that he is in the wrong apartment and apologises.

As concerns the scenery, *Nocturnal Hero* is very simple opening with cartoonish snoring to indicate a bedroom and some bustling noises to represent the intruder. Since the quality of the recording is very poor, it is hard to tell whether there was originally more to be heard than what translates through the noises today. The movements of the characters do not always seem to correspond with the time it would take to move from one room to the next, and in general their movement does not affect their way of speaking, which again indicates a very static recording process. In *Idleness*, where the quality of the recording is much better, the establishment of the different sonic spaces is clearer such as when G’s voice fades a little, when she goes to open the front door and moves closer to the microphone, when she returns. In both episodes the sound effects are very rudimentary such as a doorbell or the sound of a chair being knocked over. It is even possible to hear that Å seems to be sitting at his desk throughout the episode, while G and the butcher remain standing. The point of view offered by the microphone is close to Å, and that is why the microphone does not follow G when she answers the door. An interesting touch to Røvsing’s interpretation is a sound she makes when walking towards the door. She sings out an expectant “oooooh” which simultaneously works as an indication of her movement away from Å’s desk and also adds a homely realism to the scene. It is not part of the manuscript but it is exactly the kind of sound one might send out to let the caller know that one is hurrying towards the door. This

³⁸³ This is a trick known from the very first drama written especially for the radio and broadcast on the BBC, Richard Hughes’ *A Comedy of Danger* (1924). In this drama, the characters are trapped in the dark underground and the listeners share their blindness accordingly.

³⁸⁴ Op.cit. Locher (21.06.1942), p. 13. The word in [] is an addition made by “Bernhard” in the recording. Original version: “Naa saadan ser De ud! Og De er i Pyjamas!”

further adds to G's lively presence, which she maintains until showing herself as a strategist beneath the merriment on two occasions. While the butcher enjoys making sexist generalisations about women and how to treat them, she listens, laughs, and adds a few generous "oh, is that so?" Then, when he mentions the sum of 500 kroner, which he is willing to pay if Å will do him the favour of making his wife think they are ruined, she changes the tone of her voice. She quickly interrupts Å's hesitant reply by saying, quite close to the microphone: "Well I think you can do Mr Madsen that favour, Aage!"³⁸⁵ The same change of tone appears later, when she has unravelled her scheme of how to also let Mr Madsen think he needs to go back to work. He is very pleased about that and says it is well worth the 500 kroner, when she lowers her voice and replies "1000" (500 for each of the Madsens). In neither of these instances is there a direction in the manuscript. The way Røvsing reveals the strategist behind G's bubbly personality is very subtle and has an important aural dimension to it. A similar change is audible in Å's speech in *Idleness*, compared to *Nocturnal Hero*. In the latter he sounds stuttering and insecure, and in the former he speaks with a professional and friendly voice since the butcher, who is essentially his customer, is present. Before he arrives, there is a more frantic and bossy tone to his voice, as he is trying to finish the butcher's accounts last minute. The butcher himself sounds like a convivial and quite heavily set man, whom Locher has given many linguistic characteristics. On several occasions he mispronounces or changes words, such as saying "performa" instead of "pro forma", which the linguistically superior Å notices along with the audience. This kind of joking at the butcher's expense is quite frequent in the manuscripts, where Locher has often added quite specific directions for the voice and speech of the supporting characters. In general it is an important indication of the social point of view of the series. Most other classes, whether higher (as with an intellectual architect in one episode) or lower (as with the butcher here), are regarded with some ridicule, and yet some of them manage to keep their dignity. Here, the butcher is not only ridiculed because of his "flawed" language, he is also tricked out of his money by the more cunning Gerda.

³⁸⁵ Op.cit. Locher (01.10.1949), p. 13. Original version: "Jeg synes godt, du kan gøre Hr. Madsen den tjeneste, Aage.."

Conclusion

There is a vast difference in the sound quality of the three recordings I have discussed above. Therefore the observations may have been made on an unfair basis, and yet I would wager that there is indeed an increased awareness of spatial dimensions from the first to the last recording. The rendering of the spaces surrounding the characters improves mainly through varying distances between the voices and the microphone and a few hints of changing ambiances. This, as we shall see in chapter 5.3., corresponds with the increased attention to technical details and gradually more elaborate stage directions seen in Locher's manuscripts over the years. Furthermore, judging by these recordings, Rovsing and Schmidt show clear signs of improvement of their interpretational skills and an increasingly relaxed attitude towards Locher's text. This again corresponds with Locher's alleged absence from the production process and their freedom to adapt the lines to their characters, which I mentioned in chapter 5.1. They make extensive use of gambit to keep the dialogue lively and themselves audibly present in the drama. There are also obvious differences between Rovsing and Schmidt's acting and the way Bernhard and the butcher are portrayed, which shows the many years of experience Rovsing and Schmidt had compared to the others. Finally, both the manuscripts and the recordings reveal important information about the social point of view, since Å & G's lower middle class position is continually privileged over other social classes by presenting the Hansen speech as the norm. In the following chapter I will return to the manuscripts and provide an overview of the developments over the years.

5.3. Same Procedure For Twenty Years?

As I have mentioned earlier, I have chosen to use the collected episodes from the years 1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49 as the large sample for my orientative reading - a total of 201 episodes. It is the foundation on which I have made inferences about the serial as a whole. Furthermore I developed the concept of "re-proportioning" based on this selection, and then chose the most ideal episodes to display the seven sub-categories of this concept (chapter 6). Finally, I have read selected episodes from other years which were of particular interest, such as the ones that exist as recordings and those that have

been commented on in the press. However, neither of these analytical categories takes the annual progression of the series into account, which is why I have chosen to add the current sub-chapter. Looking at isolated episodes or single re-proportioning categories makes it possible to understand some of the specific mechanisms of popular broadcasting (“the how”). Yet, relying on such an analysis alone would mean losing sight of the general pattern. Therefore I will attach some comments to each of the selected years from THF as well as discuss any developments in the series through the years. This will serve as a context for the analyses as well as an impression of THF *as a whole*. As mentioned in chapter the analyses are based on the collection held at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, and in cases of absences I have completed the reading with manuscripts from the DBC archive where available.

1929: Domestic sketches³⁸⁶

According to the broadcast dates recorded in the DBC archives (BD), 27 episodes were broadcast from the debut of THF in April until the last episode of the year on 23 December, 1929. Of those episodes, five are no longer available at the DBC or the Royal Library (RL), but the remaining portion paints a clear picture of the initial style of THF. The first year is characterised by simple one act-pieces of 10-15 pages, usually featuring only Å & G, with the notable exception of the temporary nanny Miss Madsen, who appears in three episodes, and a few less important appearances by other characters. Most of the scenes are set in the THF home after the end of the workday, when Å & G exchange their views on child rearing, marriage, divorce, relatives etc. There are very few stage notes indicating the soundscape, apart from an episode set in a restaurant (17.09.) and an episode concerning the radio gymnastics programme lead by Captain Jespersen (21.06.). The sound effects are few and far between and are mainly just single sounds handwritten by the stage director into the manuscripts.

As mentioned in chapter 5.1., THF started out as a single sketches rather than as a proper series with an established milieu and a regular set of characters. This is reflected

³⁸⁶ In the following sections devoted to one year, I have written the manuscript dates in brackets and only added the year, when it did not correspond with the section title. In the last section gathering all the selected years, I have added the year to avoid confusion.

in the earlier half of the manuscripts, which contain some continuity mistakes (e.g. different names for G's sister). About 2/3 into the year, the first signs of a longer storyline appear. This is one of the longest storylines I have been able to identify in the otherwise very episodic serial. As early as in episode no. 7, G mentions that she is envious of Å's job, in episode no. 20 she returns to work, where she stays until resigning in episode no. 24 and Å fires their temporary nanny in no. 25. This discussion of women and their professional lives is the only non-domestic theme in an otherwise very domestic-oriented year of production.

1934: Adapting to modernity

As was the case with 1929, a few episodes from 1934 are also missing, leaving about 30 of the 35 listed in BD. The first change between the two years that springs to mind is the length of the manuscripts, which is now 12-20 pages, thus providing space for slightly more intricate storylines and arguments. It also allows for more characters in the single episode: The Mother-in-law (M-i-l) appears in eight of them and there are several examples of one-off characters such as an architect, a landlord, and further family members. The extended manuscripts as well as the changing cast are an indication that the domestic squabbles of Å & G are no longer the main content of THF. Instead 1934 featured many passing trends like *The Chilling Method* (15.04.)³⁸⁷, nudism (19.08.), exchanging one's name for something unique (16.09.), and other, more lasting signs of modernity such as personal hygiene (09.09.), a new high-speed train (29.05.), city-dwellers taking to the countryside (02.04., 19.08., 26.08.), and modern living (21.01./21.04., 29.04., 06.05., 22.05., 01.10.). In fact, the theme of modern living in the shape of functionalist architecture and furniture design is awarded a striking amount of attention. In the spring of 1934, Å & G move into a functionalist apartment, which is fully equipped with all of the latest amenities such as an elevator, a Frigidaire, and central heating. These new phenomena are treated with a mixture of awe and alienation, as the Hansens are just regular people, unused to dealing with the latest inventions. In one episode (06.05.), G is diagnosed with "funkiska" by Å, because she drifts into a state of apathy when confronted with the new fully automatic home. In

³⁸⁷ For an analysis of this episode, see 6.2.4.

another episode (29.05.), she is literally forced off a recently introduced train by confused travellers who are eager to keep up with high-speed technology. The struggle of learning to interact with new technologies and inventions is an important one and although G experiences some difficulties adapting, she is usually more inclined to embrace modernity than Å.³⁸⁸ Hence she invites her architect cousin to their home to suggest some functionalist improvement to their interior design, whereas Å prefers to stick with their heirlooms.³⁸⁹

Just as the central themes revolve around change and new challenges, so the script writing reveals more attention to experiments and technical detail than was the case in 1929. There is a rare incidence of the use of flashback in the episode called *Bøgebakkebo* (Beech Top Dwelling, 02.04.) which is a humorous take on urban longing for the countryside. This experiment is quite an exception among the usually very linear narratives in THF. Even if it remains an anomaly throughout, the fact that Locher includes it is a symptom of an increased confidence working with the serial format as well as a yearning for new challenges and change. Furthermore, these manuscripts are a testament to the development of the radio drama genre, which was still very much in its infancy when THF started but was already becoming more of an independent art form in 1934. The technical possibilities as well as the author's knowledge of them had improved considerably. The fact that Locher was beginning to incorporate the aural reproduction of his text is reflected in stage notes such as "Long beforehand they are heard fighting in the hallway."³⁹⁰ Or the many details about exactly how Å's voice and the wailing of the children are heard in *Om at tage Bad* (About showering, 09.09.1934). The same kind of technical curiosity is visible in the choice of location, which is more flexible in 1934. While in 1929 there was only one episode outside the THF home (17.09.1929), there are four such episodes in 1934. Additionally, several of them begin just after an outing to which Å & G refer frequently; this expands the narrative universe

³⁸⁸ Only five years later it is the M-i-l who expresses her alienation in the new times and her new apartment in *Attic Clearing*, while Å & G seem more neutral on the matter. See 6.2.2. for an analysis.

³⁸⁹ A few years later Charlie Chaplin humorously depicted the struggles of the working man in an industrialised society in *Modern Times* (1936). Although this film was even more critical of the development than THF and looked at the broader consequences of a mechanised world, the alienation depicted is similar to that seen in THF.

³⁹⁰ *Automobiludstilling* (Automobile show), 11.04.1934, p. 3. Original version: "Allerede længe i Forvejen hører man dem skændes i Entreen."

from the narrow confines of the THF home to include the rest of Copenhagen and a few locations in the countryside.

In conclusion, the manuscripts from 1934 reveal an increased attention to the technical and dramaturgical possibilities of radio drama, as well as contain themes that extend well beyond the domestic and marital discussions that dominated 1929. A central issue here is the characters' struggle to navigate the modern world with all its new demands and possibilities for the individual, something which will also turn out to be representative of G's approach to the world in future episodes. In chapter 6.2.4. I will look at how THF approached these new trends as one category of "re-proportioning", i.e. one way of including topical material in the series and making it relatable to a family audience.

1939: Further experiments and the impending war

1939 marks the year when the production of THF went from taking longer breaks during the summer holiday to broadcasting every single week of the year. This impressive production schedule lasted until the series ended, which might also indicate a certain function and new usage of THF during the war. Although there might be many other reasons for choosing to cancel the summer holidays, the fact that the change coincides with the beginning of WWII makes it seem like a strategic decision. If so, THF with its weekly promise of light entertainment would have been an important part of maintaining normalcy during the occupation.

Returning to the episodes from 1939, there are 42 available in the archives. The first impression reveals a development away from the simple domestic dialogues that dominated 1929 and parts of 1934, and towards a more varied cast. Now there are but 11 episodes featuring only Mr and Mrs Hansen and the rest include several appearances by the now about six-year-old twins, and the M-i-l whose place is taken by G's sister Ellen in the reruns during the late 1940s (after Olivia Norrie, the actress playing the M-i-l passed away in 1945, as mentioned in chapter 5.2.). Additionally there are many different one-time appearances by distant relatives, strangers in the street etc. This variety of characters results in a significant variety in the language, and the attention to

linguistic wit and sociolect is much more prominent. The many characters must also have affected the cost and time of the production, indicating that the DBC was still quite invested in THF, financially speaking. Furthermore, featuring characters that only stay for one or two episodes means there is very little time to establish them properly. That is where Locher's talent for linguistic observation came in handy. The manuscripts abound with colloquialisms, slang and witticism, most of which is very difficult to render in translation for obvious reasons. One example though is the episode about Mrs Johnson, a Danish woman who has spent several years in the USA and now speaks with an American accent. Though this episode sadly does not exist as a recording, the "accent" is obvious from the stage directions and her lines. She makes a comment about coming to Copenhagen for "et lille Trip"³⁹¹, using the English word "trip" instead of the Danish equivalent "tur". Another example is the kind of witticism that the twins add to the series, as when they have just broken a pitcher and promise: "We will never break that pitcher again."³⁹²

Simultaneously with this multitude of characters and linguistic observation small signs of war start appearing.³⁹³ Episodes such as *Pulterkammerrydning* (Attic Clearing³⁹⁴, 05.02.1939), *Hamstring* (Hoarding, 17.09.1939), *Tørv* (Peat, 15.10.1939), and *Husvagt* (House guard, 03.12.) contain discussions of solidarity, a sense of civic duty, and distant muttering about war preparations. Still, there are plenty of episodes dedicated to slapstick situations and a favoured topic is the juxtaposition of countryside versus city life as seen in *Paasketur* (Easter trip, 09.04.), *Gaatur paa Landet* (A walk in the countryside, 07.05.), and *Gamle Marens Hus* (The house of old Maren, 24.09.). Just as was the case in 1934, the treatment of city versus countryside usually ridicules the fantasies of the urban dwellers and their inability to navigate what they expect to be an intuitive and more "authentic" landscape. It is a confusion similar to the one the Hansens experienced when faced with the new contraptions of modernity in 1934, with the important difference that they expect to be able to handle the countryside, but

³⁹¹ *Stakkels Misses Johnson* (Poor Mrs Johnson), 30.04.1929. P. 12.

³⁹² *Begravelse* (Funeral), 23.04.1939. P. 11. Original version: "Vil vil aldrig mere slå den Vandkande itu."

³⁹³ In chapter 6.2.6. I will discuss how THF could have been used for creating a sense of community and containing hidden critique in the shape of "nudges". The nudges I have chosen to focus on first begin appearing in the period immediately before WWII.

³⁹⁴ For an analysis of this episode, see chapter 6.2.2.

rarely ever manage this in the end. These experiences of alienation when faced with nature *as well as* with technology are signs of modernity and Locher's critical stance towards it. Man is trapped between what he still considers his natural past closer to nature and a yet uncertain present amidst new technologies.

Concerning the production aspect, 34 episodes take place in the THF home and eight are at other locations. It may not seem like much of a change since 1934, but there are also a few notable experiments and an even further developed attention to the production in Locher's manuscripts. In *Helt eller ikke Helt..?* (Hero or no hero?, 06.08.1939), where Å rescues a lady from the sea, Locher writes "now imagine the microphone close to the water"³⁹⁵, or when a bell is ringing "as if right into one's own ear".³⁹⁶ Again, these would have been very interesting to hear in a recording. Finally, in the Christmas episode of 1939, the following description appears: "We now follow Aage on his wild chase down the main stairs."³⁹⁷ It is a much more detailed way of imagining the aural reproduction of the manuscript than what was seen in the earlier years where a simple bell would have been mentioned and no directions as concerned the positioning of the microphone were even considered. However the most remarkable experiment in 1939 is an episode in two scenes at two different locations, something which very rarely happens. The interesting part is how the two scenes are interconnected without the use of a speaker in a way that indicates an increased expectation of media literacy from the audience. The listener follows the characters on a taxi ride to the horse race by use of sound effects only (no speech):

During the following [scene] the noises from the car and the street are heard. / All of these sounds increase in intensity to make it obvious that it is meant as a conclusion and a transition [to the next scene].³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ *Helt eller ikke Helt...?* (Hero or no hero?), 06.08.1939. P. 9. Original version: "Mikrofonen maa nu tænkes ført ned ved Vandkanten."

³⁹⁶ *Overraskelses-Kassen* (The box of surprises), 20.08.1939. P. 2. Original version: "...som ringede den lige i ens Øre".

³⁹⁷ *Juleaften* (Christmas eve), 26.12.1939. P. 13. Original version: "Man følger nu Aage paa hans vilde Fart ned ad Hovedtrappen."

³⁹⁸ *Nummer Fire* (Number four), 10.12.1939. Pp. 18/19. Original version: "...under det følgende høres Vognens og Gadernes Lyde. / Alle Lydene tager nu til i Voldsomhed...saa man forstaar, at det er ment som en Afslutning og en Overgang."

This exact technique had been included in an article by radio drama writer Oluf Bang ten years earlier³⁹⁹, when he shared his experiences from a recent research trip to a radio drama department in Berlin. Considering the conservatism of the domestic serial format, it is not surprising that this kind of experiment did not reach THF until 10 years later. On the contrary, it is surprising that it reached it at all, since it must have meant a time consuming departure from what was probably a rather schematic production process at the time.

The general impression of THF in 1939 is an increased production awareness (even if, as I mentioned in chapter 5.2., Locher apparently did not take part in the production) in the manuscripts, which also reveals that his sense of adventure had not decreased since 1934. As concerns the themes, the impending war and the city versus countryside trope are noteworthy among the usual discussions of marriage, child rearing, family etc. Even if about three quarters of the episodes take place in the family home, the inclusion of more characters on a regular basis broadens the variety of the discussions and the linguistic colouring of THF.

1944: A safe haven

Thematically speaking, 1944 does not stray far from the path laid out in the previous years. The main difference is a return to the more intimate issues of love, relationships, marital difficulties - and financial worries. The “trends” category (see chapter 6.2.4.), where passing fashions and new fixed ideas are given the comedic treatment, has all but disappeared, as have the episodes concerned with modernity. In spite of this return to domestic issues there are even more characters than usual in every episode. A year before that the reviewer from the Jutlandic paper *Vestkysten Esbjerg* remarked how a particular episode featured no less than two supporting characters, which he enjoyed since “hearing more voices always livens everything up”.⁴⁰⁰ Of the 51 episodes I have read from 1944, 24 contain four or more people, which again means increased production costs. It is also an opportunity to project the domestic issues that used to be

³⁹⁹ Bang, Oluf; “Fra en Studierejse” in: *Radiolytteren*, 30.11.1929.

⁴⁰⁰ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 08.02.1943. Original version: “[...] det liver altid lidt op at høre flere Stemmer.”

discussed only by Å & G onto other couples. The small part of the discussions that actually surround the Hansens are a bit more serious in nature than the previous ones. About 15 years into their marriage, Å & G experience some trouble keeping their passion alive. They seek the advice of an elderly couple in *Der klinkes og sammenbrændes!* (Mending and welding, 26.03.), G misses having some romance in her life in *Hjem fra Selskab* (Returning from a dinner party, 02.04.) and *Almindelig* (Ordinary, 19.03.), and in several episodes Å & G act as intermediaries to other couples having difficulties as in *De glemte Galoscher* (The forgotten wellingtons, 14.05.) and *Moderne Tvang* (Modern force, 22.10.). One episode in particular takes the discussion to a meta-level clearly reflected in the title *Ægteskabelig Scene* (Marital Scene, 30.01.). It is the story of the neighbouring couple Richard and Susanne who “act out” their argument in the THF home with Å & G (and the radio listeners) as their audience. The theatrical metaphor is not just hinted at, it is explicit in the dialogue, as in the closing line spoken by Richard: “The curtain goes down. My wife and I are going up! Goodbye...!”⁴⁰¹ This is one among a few episodes through the years where Locher added a meta-dimension to his manuscripts. Other examples include an untitled episode from 1934, where a recent trend of changing one’s ordinary “-sen name” (Hansen, Jensen, etc.) into something more unique is given the comedic treatment. In his last line, Å says:

The escape from “Hansen” these days is so severe that there will soon be no more Hansens left, and since the other six guys at the office are changing their names, there is no reason for me to. For it would be sad if The Hansen Family were to disappear completely from Denmark...!⁴⁰²

This idea of playing with the marital theme on a meta-level is one among a few other experiments. Apart from that there are several episodes in two acts, divided by tuning in and out of the sound or having the microphone follow the characters from one place to the other. Even with these experiments, the text itself often reveals a certain lack of trust in the audience’s ability to decipher the action from sound alone. Hence there are still examples of expositional remarks such as “here is a bottle” or “there you go: here it

⁴⁰¹ *Ægteskabelig Scene*, 30.01.1939. P. 23. Original version: “Tæppet gaar ned. Min Hustru og jeg gaar op! Farvel...!”

⁴⁰² *Untitled episode*, 19.09.1934. P. 18. Original version: “Flugten fra Hansen er for Tiden saa voldsom, at der snart ingen Hansner er tilbage, og naar de seks andre paa Kontoret tager Navneforandring, er der jo slet ingen Grund til, at jeg gør det. Det vilde jo nemlig være trist, om Familien Hansen helt skulde forsvinde i Danmark...!”

is” instead of including it more naturally in the conversation or simply presenting the sound of a bottle.

Finally, there is a wealth of references to “movements”⁴⁰³, a kind of re-proportioning which is usually characterised by expressions such as “in these times” or “nowadays”, referring to a larger collective experience shared by the audience and the characters at a particular time. In this case the point of reference is often the experience of living during the occupation and wartime in general, which I will show in chapter 6.2.5. The near-absence of trends and signs of modernity are very possibly symptoms of the last year of the German occupation, when the connections to the outside world were limited and the Danish relationship to the occupational forces had become very tense. It could also be a sign that Locher was treading carefully with the German radio censors by choosing subjects as close to the hearth as possible in order to avoid any references to the political situation. The severity of the times may also explain the many episodes alluding to financial issues, either in the shape of the tricks the characters play on each other to avoid paying for something (often between Å & G’s brother-in-law Ebbe), Å’s calculations of how much they spent on presents versus how much other people spent on theirs in *Julegaven* (The Christmas present, 16.01.) or other clever ways of saving money as in *Byttehandelen* (The trade, 02.01.). A final theme that connects financial difficulties and a need for distraction during the war is seen in the episodes displaying signs of escapism. In *Rejsen til Hawai* (The trip to Hawaii, 13.08.), Å & G return from a dinner party held by a more affluent couple, and G is depressed by their own humble dwellings. Instead she wants to listen to Hawaii music and dream about distant adventures. As in many other episodes concerning these dreams of G’s, the moral usually spelled out at the end is that wealth does not guarantee happiness and that there is satisfaction in contentment. This last moral seems very directed at the Danes at that period in time and in *Gule Ærter og Flæsk* (Yellow peas and pork, 12.11.) the moral is taken one step further: as long as one is missing something, one may continue to dream. Having everything merely kills the dream. This kind of philosophy was not only a necessity for everyday survival it was also a way of building a national community around the shared experience of austerity and want.

⁴⁰³ See 6.1. for a description of this category, and 6.2.5. for an analysis.

Summing up 1944, the manuscripts show clear signs of wartime. Locher seems very preoccupied with relationships, especially the opposition of romance versus the reality of marriage. A fundamental discontentment is still showing in G's character as she longs for adventure and a more luxurious lifestyle, while Å teaches her to be content with what they have. There is also a heightened awareness of the cost of things and a kind of social bookkeeping, resulting in tricks to make the other one pay his or her dues. All in all, many signs of a nation under surveillance, forced to focus on the "intimate" details of social interaction, examine their relationships, and count every penny twice. In short: THF in 1944 is more of a safe haven and a place for introspection than an arena for the discussion of new developments in society.

1949: No surprises

The final year of THF has a record of six recycled episodes from earlier years against three in 1944.⁴⁰⁴ Although there were many reruns from 1929 in 1930, the vast majority of recycled episodes appear in the 1940s, and it is by no means surprising if this number was higher towards the end of THF run when the novelty had worn off. Similarly, 1949 offers more standard fare even in the seemingly new episodes. It is difficult to find any distinctive features other than the fact that there *are* no fundamental changes or developments. Granted, there are slightly fewer characters, an average of 2-3 per episode and the manuscripts have shortened accordingly (15-20 pp.). The content is a mixture of financial worries, existential/marital discussions, and characters playing tricks on each other for comedic effect, something, which has been a recurring theme in the other years. There are also quite a few episodes concerning Å's enormous appetite and equally large physique, such as *Pølseresten* (Leftover sausage, 11.01.), *Karneval* (Carneval, 17.01.), *Amerikansk Olie* (Castor oil, 24.02.), and *Massage* (09.03.) etc. This is another recurring theme, although it seems unusually omnipresent in 1949, which might be a counter-reaction to postwar austerity. As the Danes are growing thin, Å is swelling up.

⁴⁰⁴ These numbers are not final, since they are based on simple, handwritten notes on the manuscripts, and I have found no other sources to measure them against.

The atmosphere of austerity omnipresent in 1944 also dominated 1949 in the sense that there is much focus on private economy and learning to be content with living a humble life or being true to one's station in society. In *Selskab* (Dinner party, 14.03.), *Den sorte Bog* (The black book, 23.04.), and *Et Besøg* (A visit, 30.04.), there are references to Å & G's many unpaid bills at the local merchants. The episodes concerning contentment with a humble life/one's current social station are not exclusive to 1949. In fact it is a recurring moral in THF, closely connected to the inherent conservatism of the serial. In episodes which I would categorise as of "the status quo variety", a new opportunity presents itself in the shape of a lotto ticket in *Gevinsten* (The prize, 03.09.1929 / 11.04.1949), a possible inheritance in *Arven* (The inheritance, 05.11.1944 / 26.11.1944), or a free ticket for a show (Untitled, 28.01.1934). Usually Å & G enter an argument about what to do and the opportunity either turns out to have been an illusion or they lose it altogether to someone more able to make a decision. In both cases the moral is that they are much better off without, the unspoken conclusion of which is that change equals disruption and putting on airs, whereas staying the same equals being true to oneself. I will return to this point in connection to the analysis of "trends" in chapter 6.2.4.

1929-49: Changing with the times

While there were no drastic changes between the five selected years, there have certainly been gradual developments and improvements from the first domestic sketches in 1929 and to the formulaic episodes in 1949. Beginning as one-act pieces the series grew into a larger whole over twenty years, during which the characters aged somewhat, though they hardly underwent any noticeable psychological changes. In the early years the episodes revolved around domestic issues featuring Å & G at home in very simple sound staging. By 1934 the scripts had grown longer and the first experiments had started appearing with more stage notes and changing locations. The central themes were influenced by an increased openness towards the world and the latest trends, which G introduced into the Hansen household. The themes of modernity, functionalism, and urban yearning back to nature were recurring. In 1939 the experiments in stage direction (especially microphone placement) and story lines were taken even further, and the cast increased, bringing new linguistic features and accents

to the series. The country-versus-city discussion was continued amidst the first signs of an impending war shown by the anxious preparations of the common citizen. 1944 marked a return to the more intimate issues of home, marriage, family, and financial worries. Characteristically, the tendency towards the lively inclusion of international “trends” as seen in 1934 changed into a frequent use of the “movements” category in 1944, which deals with larger issues and living conditions as an undercurrent to the domestic situations, often with a more serious tone. Interestingly, the focus on domestic issues does not affect the increasing cast list or the continued experimentation with alternative story lines here and there. Finally, 1949 showed signs of fatigue, with quite a few recycled episodes from other years, fewer characters and further signs of postwar austerity. Still, there was plenty of comedy, often at Å's expense when his childish shenanigans to procure more food and his large corpus were ridiculed.

Concerning the cast, there was a steady growth in the number of people in every episode over the years (until the dip in 1949), thus introducing linguistic variety and wit. The locations changed from being mainly in the THF apartment to also including outdoor locations in the city or the countryside in the middle years and a return to the domestic setting towards the end. The same development is visible in the themes, which extend from issues within the private sphere to signs of modernity and back again. In short, what THF offered to its listeners was a guide to relationships and modern life, discussions about how to navigate the treacherous times of depression and world war, plenty of comic relief, and a multitude of voices representing different regions, sexes, and social classes - all of which fluctuated ever so gently with the changing times. In that sense it sought to reflect a certain version of Danish life by addressing the audience with topical references and an attention to the universal issues weaving through everyday life

5.4. "Silliness On the Radio" - the public reception of *The Hansen Family*

The play ended with this sentence: "It is inappropriate not to send one's children to a dancing school!" It would probably have been a delight for Jens Locher's ears, had he been able to hear the many mothers all over Denmark telling their husbands: "See? I told you so!" What was said thereafter will not be recounted here.⁴⁰⁵

[...] what we were presented with this Sunday evening makes us angry and for the sake of our children, we must protest against it vehemently. In serious times, it is lowly to glorify the effects of alcohol, no matter if it is a bookkeeper, a grocer, or a labourer, who has to do it. When such things are tolerated on the radio, surely a more strict kind of censorship is needed, or else the decay will celebrate too many large triumphs in our country and among the people.⁴⁰⁶

Silly as *The Hansen Family* may have seemed to some listeners, it certainly caused many contrasting reactions around the country, which revealed important details about the series as well as expectations to the DBC. In the following I will present the main themes in the public reception of THF based on the press clippings held at the DBC Archives⁴⁰⁷, which contains not only reviews but also a few letters from listeners. I have chosen to focus on comments of relevance to the re-proportioning aspect of the series, which I will be using as the guiding principle for my content analyses in chapter 6. This subject is

⁴⁰⁵ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 11.03.1940. Original version: "Hørespillet endte med denne Sætning: "Det er upassende ikke at sende sine Børn i Danseskole!" Det vilde sikkert have frydet Jens Lochers Øren, om han kunde have hørt alle de mange Mødre Danmark over sige til deres Gemal: "Der kan du selv høre!" Hvad der senere blev sagt, skal her ikke refereres!"

⁴⁰⁶ Letter from a reader/listener (author unknown) in: *Lollands Posten Maribo*, 05.03.1940. Original version: "[...] det vi blev præsenteret for i Søndags Aftes maa vi harmes over og for vore Børns Skyld nedlægge en skarp Protest imod. I en alvorstid er det for tarveligt at herliggøre Spirituosens virkninger, ligegyldigt om det er en Bogholder, en Grosserer, eller en Aarbejder, der skal gøre det. Naar sligt taaes i radioen, trænges der aabenbart til en strængere Censur, thi ellers vil Råddenskabene fejre alt for mange store Triumfer i vort land og folk.

⁴⁰⁷ This collection contains close to 130 clippings from the years 1932-47 procured by the DBC mainly through *Journalistforbundets Avisudklips-Bureau* (The Journalist Union press clippings bureau). Whether the DBC only subscribed partially to the service or whether some clippings have gone missing is uncertain, but this is by no means a complete collection of the THF-reviews from the period. For one, there are none of Henningsen's reviews from the mid 1930s. A staggering amount of the reviews are by the same reviewer signed with a "Z" in *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, who is generally positive towards THF. However, as this is the only collection of reviews in one place, I have chosen to use only this and a few further reviews where necessary.

entangled with questions of reflection/relevance as well as of responsibility.⁴⁰⁸ In other words, was THF acknowledged as an accurate or relevant reflection? And to what extent did the reflection correspond with the audience's perception of the DBC's responsibility as a state institution? These are the issues I wish to discuss by looking at the three r's: Responsibility, Reflection, and Re-proportioning. The relationship between the three is as follows: Responsibility is connected to public service broadcasting and the expectations to a state institution in charge of addressing and servicing a whole nation. Reflection is one strategy for doing this, and education, entertainment, or challenge, are further strategies, many of which can and do coexist within one institution and the DBC is no exception. Finally, re-proportioning is a sub-category forming a practical dimension to these strategies, with the exception of the challenge strategy, which would be more likely to depict contrasts than reflections of sameness as was radio critic Henningsen's ardent wish (see chapter 4.3.). By transforming topical content to suit a domestic scale in THF, re-proportioning is a "reflective" practice, showing the audience only that which directly relates to and affects them in their own lives. This in turn contributes towards fulfilling the public service institution's responsibility of bringing together the nation and making itself relevant to a wide audience. In the following I have chosen to approach the r's in a reverse order, so as to finish on the top level with the r that caused most discussions: Responsibility.

Before continuing with the public reception, it is necessary to point out that when I am referring to "the audience" in the present sub-chapter, it refers to the critics unless stated otherwise; I have not had access to any reception studies made with individual audiences. Instead I am working under the assumption that the critics reflect or indicate public opinion to a certain extent. One reviewer in particular, "Z" from *Vestkysten Esbjerg* positions him or herself as speaking on behalf of the audience with constant remarks about what "the listeners" felt or thought at a particular time. The reviews in the collection are often short, subjective, and almost devoid of "evidence" or critical analysis, which one might expect in a review today. After all, the radio review, as well as

⁴⁰⁸ See chapter 5.5. about THF as a reflection. The idea of "relevance" was even highlighted by Wade in chapter 2.2.4. as a common denominator of serials dealing with social and moral issues. The same applies to THF.

the art of radio drama were both comparatively new genres at this point, still struggling to find their place and purpose in the world.

Re-proportioning

Reading through the reviews, there are quite a few references to the areas covered by the different categories of re-proportioning in Locher's series, which I will introduce in chapter 6.1. Naturally the critics did not use that specific term, as I created it based on my observations from reading the manuscripts. Still, there is a lot of focus on the act of scriptwriting and on how Locher transformed everyday material into THF-drama. There are references to episodes of the "holidays and seasons" category (see chapter 6.2.3.) such as one concerning doing one's tax returns. Here it is mentioned that "The author of the dialogue, Mr Jens Locher, usually takes advantage of the topical things right away [...]"⁴⁰⁹ or in another review: "There was ample opportunity for the author Jens Locher to treat the old Carnival customs ironically [...]"⁴¹⁰ There were even critics who traced Locher's research process:

Mr Jens Locher also reads the papers, and since a Copenhagen newspaper has picked up that children do not like bringing their parents to school during the so-called "Parents' week" Mr Locher has immediately "snatched the idea".⁴¹¹

This means that the critics were alert to Locher's "journalistic" approach to scriptwriting. His talent for spotting topical issues was widely known and it was often contributed to his background in the printed press.⁴¹² Episodes belonging to the "commissions" category such as *Kludeindsamlingen* (Rag Collecting, April 1943) were referred to as having deliberately topical content.⁴¹³ THF also made an unusual cameo

⁴⁰⁹ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, date unknown, but probably from 1939 or 1940. Original version: "Dialogens Forfatter, Hr. Jens Locher, udnytter som Regel de aktuelle Ting med det samme [...]".

⁴¹⁰ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, date unknown, but probably from February 1939. Original version: "Der var for Forfatteren Jens Locher god Lejlighed til at ironisere over de gamle Fastelavnsskikke [...]".

⁴¹¹ Review in: *Vestkysten*, 20.11.1938. Original version: "Hr. Jens Locher læser jo ogsaa Bladene, og da et københavnsk Dagblad har faaet opsnuset, at Børnene ikke bryder sig om at have Forældrene med i Skolen i den saakaldte "Forældreuge", har Hr. Locher straks "nappet Fidusen"."

⁴¹² One unusual example of this is in the aforementioned *Hvor Julen allerede er forberedt*, 13.11.1937, a radio feature about different Christmas preparations throughout the year. Among other things, reporter Aksel Dahlerup pays a visit to the offices of the satirical magazine *Svikmøllen*, where Locher happened to be working. Locher is not present at the time of the recording, but his colleagues refer to him as the one who always feeds the employees with news stories for their illustrations.

⁴¹³ Review in: *Politiken*, 19.04.1943.

appearance in a radio lecture on arthritis in order to support the national fundraising for arthritis patients. In *Fædrelandet*⁴¹⁴ it was described as a clever inclusion of THF and in *Politiken* the gimmick was humorously dubbed “propaganda”.⁴¹⁵ All of these comments suggest that the audience themselves were beginning to regard then current affairs with a degree of critical distance, considering whether this or the other subject might be worth covering and if so, how Locher would do it. That in itself is a testament to the way the media was used for “working through”⁴¹⁶ the issues of modern man as part of an endless cycle of public (self-)development.

Since most of the reviews are rather short, references to re-proportioning-like processes do not extend far beyond the quotations above, which are mainly just observations of Locher’s topical technique. Actual evaluations are much more difficult to extract from the mostly summarizing reviews. However, as will be apparent from the next paragraph, many of them are quick to judge whether or not they agree with the “mirror-image” of the Danes that Locher has created.

Reflection

The kind of references to Locher’s topicality quoted above are often used as opening remarks in the reviews instead of commenting directly on the episode itself. Even if they are not always followed by an evaluation of his vision of the times, it is an acknowledgement of his re-proportioning efforts. At other times there are direct comments accepting his depiction: “It was also a sign of the times, when the children had eaten so much chocolate in school that they were unable to drink hot chocolate once they came home [...]”⁴¹⁷ On the other hand are the reviewers who, while acknowledging Locher’s *attempts* at capturing the times, find the depiction exaggerated: “The Hansen Family” was brilliant last night, funny – although we men were made slightly more pitiful than we are, and the ladies slightly more clever, than we would like

⁴¹⁴ Review in: *Fædrelandet*, 02.10.1943.

⁴¹⁵ Review in: *Politiken*, 01.10.1943.

⁴¹⁶ See chapter 6.1.

⁴¹⁷ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 13.11.1939. Original version: “Det var ogsaa et Tidens Tegn, at Børnene havde spist saa megen Chokolade i Skolen, at de ikke kunne drikke Chokolade, da de kom hjem [...]”

to think!”⁴¹⁸ In general though, the reviewers and listeners have no trouble drawing direct parallels between the lessons learned in the Hansen universe and the relationships of real Danes, of which the opening quotation in the present chapter is just one example.

Though not directly related to the depiction of Danish life and the Danish people, it is interesting to see how the reviewers judge Locher’s ability to properly reflect *The Hansen Family* in keeping with the characters. In an episode about tax returns, one reviewer complains that surely the mother-in-law would not be quite *that* silly⁴¹⁹ and in another review Å’s very Danish pronunciation of the words “dry madeira” is seen as misguided: “Would a man of Hansen’s caliber not be aware of the English pronunciation?”⁴²⁰ Such an observation also tells us something about the prejudices and expectations connected to certain social classes and in this case Å’s knowledge of language is something that distinguishes him from the rest. Remarks like these indicate that the characters were perceived as more three-dimensional than their actual representations, even in possession of qualities that might not always be displayed on the air. Interestingly though, the most revealing remarks about THF as a *reflection* are made in connection to the DBC and its responsibilities as a state institution as we will see below.

Responsibility

In chapter 4.3. I presented the “public service” definitions inherent in the “elite reception” (e.g. Henningsen et al.) of THF as well as in general statements made by officials such as the Director-General of the DBC and the Danish Prime Minister. In spite of the fact that this discussion is very similar to the one I will be presenting here, I deliberately chose to place the elite reception in that chapter, since it mainly operates on an idealistic/political level. The present discussion on the other hand, is rooted in

⁴¹⁸ Review in: *Politiken*, 30.10.1938. Original version: “Familien Hansen” var flot igaar, morsom - selvom vi Mandfolk blev gjort en Kende mer skrogede, end vi er, og Damerne en Kende mer træske, end vi gerne vil tro!”

⁴¹⁹ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, date unknown, but probably from 1939 or 1940.

⁴²⁰ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 02.10.1939. Original version: “Mon ikke en Mand af Hansens Kaliber skulde kende den engelske Udtale?”

specific examples from episodes, which spurned the discussion from below as opposed to top-down.

There is a general assumption among the reviews that some material is not appropriate for comedy on the DBC, partly because of the severity of a particular situation, but almost always because it is broadcast by a state institution which is expected to behave in accordance with its public status. As we have already seen in chapter 2.1., this expectance led to an exaggerated degree of self-censorship according to Soya, who stated that no interesting subjects were allowed into radio drama due to the DBC's obsession with pleasing everyone. Either way, what did behaving "in accordance with the DBC's public status" mean? Let us look at a further example, which may clarify this:

In March 1942, two left wing papers printed complaints about an episode of THF, in which a laundry lady (Mrs Mortensen) was accused of stealing. In *Sønderborg Social-Demokrat* it said:

We seem to recall that "The Hansen Family" is to be understood as a type and therefore we cannot help thinking, that the regular deliverer of comedies for the State Radiophony also considers Mrs Mortensen a type. And that seems both insolent and particularly unfortunate for a state institution such as the Radiophony.⁴²¹

According to this, Locher's story was offensive to the whole profession of laundry ladies. Obviously they did not consider the use of (stereo-)types a way of safely working with character traits without targeting any particular individuals or professions. Neither did the lady behind a complaint in *Social-Demokraten*:

What was served on the radio on Sunday evening was an obvious insult to those women, who have to do other people's laundry in order to make a living. [...] I am writing this on behalf of 16 women, with whom I have been at a sewing club today. Everyone agreed on commenting

⁴²¹ "Hvad er meningen?" ("What is the Meaning of This?") (author unknown) in: *Sønderborg Social-Demokrat*, 17.03.1942. Original version: "...vi erindrer noget om, at "Familien Hansen" ønskes opfattet som Type, og vi kan derfor ikke lade være med at tro, at Statsradiofonien's faste Leverandør af Lystspilssituationer ogsaa har opfattet Fru Mortensen som Type. Og det forekommer os at være baade flabet og særdeles uheldigt for en statslig Institution som Radiofonien."

on it, as we all think there are limits to what can be said on the radio, even if it is under the cloak of jollity.⁴²²

Both sources mention the limits involved with public service broadcasting, something which renders otherwise quite ordinary comedic stereotyping unsavoury and disrespectful.⁴²³ In other words, what might have been entertaining in a different context loses its charm when it is broadcast from a central point to the whole country. This speaks volumes about the public regard for the DBC as a kind of witness of truth as well as a powerful medium in a position to radically affect public opinion. However, Locher did not quite acknowledge this in his response, but chose instead to argue as if they were speaking of literature, thus ignoring the technical mass communication reality of THF: "And why think that *all* laundry ladies are targeted, just because one is described as unfortunate? If that were the case, one could never let any person do anything in literature."⁴²⁴

A similar example of the public's regard for the DBC and its power as a national medium, is the debacle of *Den blaa Kat* (The Blue Cat, 14.11.1943). Although the episode contained a sensible discussion of children and respect for the lives of animals, it was one of the last lines that caused a stir in the public. Little Å has decided to paint the family cat blue in order to make it more unique among other cats. As a humorous finishing line, G sends Little Å away to buy turpentine for removing the paint from the cat's fur. This resulted in a veritable telephone storm on the DBC, with listeners demanding that they issue a retraction immediately. Consequently, the late news on the same evening contained an apology as well as a warning against using turpentine on animals. In the DBC collection there are 15 articles on this subject alone, most of which

⁴²² "Dagens Læserbrev" ("Letter of the week") (author unknown) in *Social-Demokraten* (?), 17.03.1942 (?). Original version: "Det, der blev serveret i Radioen i Søndags Aftes, var en oplagt Fornærmelse mod de Kvinder, der maa ernære sig ved at vaske for andre. [...] Dette skriver jeg paa 16 Kvinders Vegne, som jeg har været sammen med i en Syklub i Dag. Alle var enige om at paatale det, da vi synes, der er Grænser for, hvad der kan siges i Radioen, selv om det har Gemytlighedens Skær."

⁴²³ As a parallel example one could mention the American sitcom *Amos 'n' Andy* (WNAQ et. al. 1928-60) in which the stereotypification of two African Americans portrayed by Caucasian actors was the very source of comedy. According to archive.org, this fact created quite a stir in the African American community at the time.

⁴²⁴ "Dagens Læserbrev" ("Letter of the week") by Jens Locher in: *Social-Demokraten* (?), date unknown. Original version: "Og hvorfor tro, at der sigtes til *alle* Vaskerkoner, fordi een omtales som mindre heldig? Var det saadan, kunde man jo aldrig lade nogen Person begaa noget i Litteraturen."

contain similar press releases about the curious story, as well as some humorous poems and drawings. The central learnings from this are important: firstly, it is evidence of bottom-up power relations that the audience caused the DBC to retract their own words only a few hours after they had first been broadcast. Secondly, it shows how the audience was not prepared to accept any fallacies or potentially dangerous advice even in a comedic context - something that could also be attributed to the still early stages of media literacy at the time. Finally, it emphasises that the power of the DBC was regarded such that some listeners considered other listeners too gullible to resist the authority of the DBC in spite of good common sense (I.e. that turpentine is not appropriate for cleaning animals).

Udklip af:
Vendsyssel Tidende,
Hjørring

15.NOV.1943

„Familien Hanser“ gav et daarligt Raad.

Som Radioavisen senere paa Aftenen maatte fraraade Folk at følge.

København, Mandag. (Privat.)
I Radioens »Familien Hansen« i Aftes blev der talt om en Kat, der havde faaet Maling paa sig, og Fru Gerda meddelte, at hun vilde skaffe Terpentintin for at faa Malingen af Katten. Da Udsendelsen sluttede, ringede en Mængde Mennesker til Statsradiofonien og oplyste, at det var grovt Dyrplageri at komme Terpentintin paa en Kat. I Radioavisens sidste Udsendelse blev der derfor givet en Advarsel til alle Katteejere aldrig at bruge Terpentintin til at tage Maling af deres Dyr.

Udklip af:
Aarhus Stiftstidende

15.NOV.1943

Familien Hansens blaamalede Kat rystede Lytterne

(Fra vor Københavns-Redaktion.)
I Radioens Udsendelse »Familien Hansen« i Aftes forekom den Spøg, at Aage malede Husets Kat blå, for at den ikke skulde ligne andre Katte. Udsendelsen sluttede med, at Katten skulde renses i Terpentintin. Denne Udsendelse medførte en Storm af telefoniske Henvendelser til Statsradiofonien fra Folk, der forklarede, at det var det værste Dyrplageri, man kunde begaa, at komme Terpentintin paa en Kat, og efter at Radioen havde indhentet Udtalelse paa kompetent Sted, udsendtes følgende:
I Statsradiofoniens Udsendelse »Familien Hansen« i Aftes omtaltes en Kat, der var malet blå og skulde have denne Farve taget af med Terpentintinolie. I den Anledning er vi blevet ringet op af Lyttere, der meget kraftigt advarede mod at bruge Terpentintinolie til at tage Farve af Dyr med. Farmaceuten, Fabrikant Svend Holm udtaler til Pressens Radioavis, at dette kan give stærke Smertier. Forfatteren Jens Locher erklærer over for Radioavisen, at det jo ikke netop var dette Problem, han tænkte paa, da han formede Familien Hansen, men han slutter sig til Advarslen, da det altsaa viser sig, at Dyrene kan tage Skade.

Udklip af:
Aalborg Amtstidende

15.NOV.1943

Dyremishandling i „Familien Hansen“

Man maa ikke komme Terpentintin paa en Kat!

KØBENHAVN, 15. Novbr. VP.
I Radioens »Familien Hansen« i Aftes blev der talt om en Kat, der havde faaet Maling paa sig, og Fru Gerda meddelte, at hun vilde skaffe Terpentintin for at faa Malingen af Katten. Da Udsendelsen sluttede, ringede en Mængde Mennesker til Statsradiofonien og oplyste, at det var grovt Dyrplageri at komme Terpentintin paa en Kat. I Radioavisens sidste Udsendelse blev der derfor givet en Advarsel til alle Katteejere om aldrig at bruge Terpentintin til at tage Maling af deres Dyr.

Selected headlines about *The Blue Cat* from regional papers, left to right: "The Hansen Family gave bad advice", "The Hansen Family's blue cat shook the listeners", "Cruelty to animals on The Hansen Family". 15.11.1943.

When the stakes are high (an animal's life, safety in wartimes), it is no longer appropriate to humorise - unless the laughter relates to a person rather than a cause. In *Husvagt* (House guard, 04.12.1939) the M-i-l takes her responsibility as house guard during air raids much too seriously, almost to the point of insanity, but the reviewer accepts it exactly because the laugh is on the M-i-l and not on the safety measures.⁴²⁵ A reader of a local paper was annoyed with the "Silliness on the radio", because the election of 1943 (during the German occupation) was not a laughing matter.⁴²⁶ Other reviews question the morals on THF, such as the ones in two local papers: A reader of *Kalundborg Folkeblad*⁴²⁷ protested the disobedience of the Hansen twins which seemed to be condoned in one episode, and another reader of *Lollands Posten* thought it "too lowly to glorify the effects of alcohol" in serious times⁴²⁸.

Now what can one make of all of these critical comments? What do they reveal about the expectations to the less than 20 year-old broadcasting institution? First and foremost it is taken for granted that the DBC project authority, which means that different rules apply for the DBC than for most other sources of information and entertainment. Furthermore, the fact that there is a public debate is a sign that both reviewers and listeners expected to be heard, their opinions to be respected and taken into consideration. In the end, it is the ongoing dialogue between audience and broadcaster that secures the DBC's status as a public institution. This very status is something that is mentioned in the positive reception, which I have deliberately not devoted much space to here. It is in the critical remarks that most of the details about the audience's expectations to THF and the DBC are revealed and so that is where my focus has been. However, as this chapter is drawing towards its end, it is worth mentioning that a journalist from *Berlingske Tidende* called THF a "solid Danish institution"⁴²⁹ and "Hr. Allevegne" (Mr Everywhere) in the more radical paper *Social-Demokraten* referred to THF as "thin soup" and an institution.⁴³⁰ Finally, the most prolific reviewer among them, the ubiquitous "Z" from *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, sums up the

⁴²⁵ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 05.12.1939.

⁴²⁶ Letter from a reader/listener (author unknown) in: *Djursland Grenaa avis*, 22.03.1943.

⁴²⁷ Letter from a reader/listener (author unknown) in: *Kalundborg Folkeblad*, 28.06.1943.

⁴²⁸ Op.cit. *Lollands Posten, Maribo* (05.03.1940). Also quoted in the beginning of this chapter.

⁴²⁹ Mention, *Berlingske Tidende*, 16.11.1944. Original version: "en grundmuret dansk Institution".

⁴³⁰ Mention, *Social-Demokraten*, 09.06.1939 (?).

composite nature of THF as follows: “It is obvious then that the radio can be a cultural factor, even in its “lighter broadcasts!”⁴³¹ Here, he did not aim at the *cultural* importance of THF but its function as a *cultivator* of children and people. Thus, he unknowingly pinpointed the enlightenment foundation of public service broadcasting as a whole.

Conclusion

In general the reception does not approach THF much on its own merits, but mainly as the product of Locher’s imagination. The critics hardly ever fail to mention his name or refer to “the author of the serial”, which is remarkable considering the innumerable anonymous scriptwriters behind serials all over the world. Many reviewers find it important to mention Locher’s journalistic approach to script writing, i.e. his eternal search for topical issues to discuss on THF. This means that much attention is paid to the re-proportioning aspects of the series, sometimes with added evaluations of the validity of the topicality. Mostly though, the reviewers are preoccupied with how Locher reflects the Danish way of life and the Danish people, sometimes feeling offended at the mirror image, at other times lapping it up uncritically. Finally, remarks about the responsibility of an institution such as the DBC are common in the reception. The main points are that particular, and more restrictive, rules apply for a national institution, exactly because it is national, and that the power of the DBC to change public opinion is not to be taken lightly.

5.5. The Afterlife of an Institution

One of the many reasons for choosing THF as a case was the fact that despite its immense success it is covered rather scantily in the media historical literature. There are plenty of brief references but so far, no separate study has been published on the subject. This means that the statements appear in texts with entirely different agendas, which THF is used for furthering in one way or the other. The references worth

⁴³¹ Review in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*, 22.02.1943. Original version: “Man kan altsaa se, at Radioen selv i sine “lettere Udsendelser” kan være en Kulturfaktor!”

discussing extend from Locher's own comments in 1929, across three anniversary publications from the DBC, to the four-volume edition of Danish media history published between 2001 and 2003 (DMH). The majority of these texts were published by either the DBC (DBC15, DBC25, DMU) or written by former employees (Holm and Dahlerup), who tend to foreground successes and anecdotal material in the history of the DBC. That is another reason the reception analysis in the previous chapter (5.4.) is so important as it provides the less DBC-official side of the story. In the current chapter, I will present the main THF sources and references in a chronological order, divided into larger categories by their approach to THF.

Celebrating and legitimising the success of *The Hansen Family*

Locher

Six months after the debut of THF Locher wrote a short article for *Radiolytteren* explaining his interest in the combination of radio and comedy as well as his sympathies in connection to his characters.⁴³² He wanted Mrs Hansen to always have the upper hand, since male characters had been in control for thousands of years and now the time had come for women to take charge:

Some people may think that it ought not be that way, but *it* is so, and my family must reflect all of the other young families of today and so Mr Hansen must lead a somewhat quiet existence as his wife would otherwise not be able to express herself, and she must be allowed to speak after so many thousands of years of listening to Mr Hansen's indisputable opinions.⁴³³

This is the first time THF is referred to as a "reflection" of real Danish families, a description that stayed with the series for many years to come, used by critics and fans alike.⁴³⁴ Here, Locher links the reign of the woman to the times and since his interest is

⁴³² Op.cit Locher (21.09.1929). P. 13.

⁴³³ Ibid. Original version: "Det kan godt være, at der er nogle, der synes, at saadan bør det ikke være, men saadan *er* det, og min Familie skal genspejle alle Tidens andre unge Familier, og saa maa Hr. Hansen føre en noget tilbagetrukket Tilværelse, ellers kan hans Kone ikke komme til at udfolde sig, og hun *maa* have Luft efter i saa mange Tusind Aar at have hørt paa Hr. Hansens uforgribelige Meninger."

⁴³⁴ I will return to this "reflection" below.

in creating a realistic reflection of his time he believes he must also follow suit and give the last word to Mrs Hansen. Although he does not mention any external criticism of this constellation, the whole article reads as one long defense for his favouring of the female lead. A comment from a reviewer 11 years later suggests that he may have been right in doing so: “For once it was Mrs Hansen who was “taken down”, but Locher must side with the men once in a while - if not, the male listeners will probably disappear!”⁴³⁵ Not necessarily adverse to the thought of women being portrayed as superior, the reviewer still appreciates a nod in the other direction, a recognition that the man’s point of view also needs to be reflected on THF. His conclusion lets us infer something that may seem banal, but which is not quite as straightforward; that listeners prefer programmes, which provide a certain degree of reflection of their own realities. As we have seen in the previous chapter (5.4.) the idea of reflection is one of the most commonly used tools of what I have called the “strategy or strategies of relevance”. This fundamental strategy for broadcasting seeks to ensure the legitimacy of the broadcasting institution by continuously rendering itself relevant to its audiences. While the strategy itself may seem painfully obvious, the tool used to achieve this end is not. For the decision about what is relevant could just as well be based on paternalistic ideals (“what is relevant for the audience is what we believe they *ought* to find relevant”) as on more “empathetic” ideals (“what is relevant to the audience is what we have learned through interaction with them”). While the former ideal is the one that has survived in popular imagination about early DBC broadcasting, the latter is what I have found to be predominant in connection to THF. Naturally, once we leave the general level behind and start looking at individual episodes of THF, we find that the reality is much more complex. In chapter 2.2.4. I introduced two terms for the most common strategies employed on the content level of many family series: the predictive/descriptive and the normative. At times conflating, and at other times conflicting, these strategies also appear in THF. The many honest attempts in THF at depicting a specific *Zeitgeist* and the living conditions of a young family from 1929-49 are of a predictive/descriptive nature. Whenever these attempts develop generalising

⁴³⁵ Undated review (probably from 1940) in: *Vestkysten Esbjerg*. Original version: “For en Gangs Skyld var det Fru Hansen, der blev “dukke”, men engang imellem maa Jens Locher holde lidt med Mændene - for ellers falder vel Han-Lytterne fra!”

and idealising aspects, they are subscribing to the normative strategy. In chapter 6 I will provide more detailed examples of these strategies.

Returning to the Locher quotation above, another thing worth noting is the expression “thousands of years of listening to Mr Hansen”. It reveals that Locher is not aiming at individual realism, but is narrowing in on a type: “The Mr Hansen”. This was also noticed by his audience, as we saw in chapter 5.4. in the example of the cleaning lady. She was accused of stealing in THF and was regarded as a representative of all cleaning ladies, thus bringing Locher complaints from the public. This issue of a specific type vs. its real life counterpart in connection to comedy was also mentioned in the second THF reference, which I would like to present. It is from the 15th anniversary publication of the DBC (DBC15).



The Hansen Family at the microphone. Ellen Røvsing (far left) and Aage Schmidt (far right). Photomontage from DBC15, p. 161.

DBC15

In 1940 Head of the Department for Drama and Literature, Werner, wrote an article for DBC15, a self-proclaimed collection of “histories”, or anecdotes from the world of cultural programming between 1925-40, covering lectures, radio drama, features etc. It was written at a time when the DBC’s views concerning the role of comedy had slowly begun to crystallise after 15 years of service. In a paragraph about THF, Werner shared his thoughts on satire in general:

Satire has its place, even though some people may feel personally stung by it, but satire may not seek to hurt particular people or talk condescendingly about one or the other class in general.⁴³⁶

However, he did not apply these thoughts directly to THF so it is difficult to say how much scrutiny Locher’s scripts were under to avoid this kind of potentially “hurtful” or “condescending” satire. What Werner did do was acknowledge that with THF as well as with everything else on the radio, listeners would always have contrasting opinions and therefore they could not be used as guidelines for future programming. Returning to THF, Werner introduced them thus:

The most lasting creations from the Axelborg [early studio location] days were not the most artistically prominent things, nor the great visiting Italian opera productions, the public orchestral concerts, the many transmissions from theatres and meeting halls, but “The Hansen Family”. The other things may live in many people’s memory, but the family is a reality that causes joy and sorrow - just like all other families.⁴³⁷

The first point he makes legitimises his inclusion of THF in his DBC account, namely the fact that it was a “lasting creation”. At that time it had been playing for 11 of the 15 years of the DBC, which made it a true cornerstone among so many other shows, which had come and gone. Furthermore, THF was at the height of its fame in 1940, so Werner

⁴³⁶ Werner (DBC15, 1940), p. 171. Original version: “Satire har sin Ret, selv om nogle tror sig personligt ramt af dens Brod, men Satiren maa ikke søge at saare bestemte Personer eller tale nedsættende om en eller anden Stand i Almindelighed.”

⁴³⁷ Op.cit. pp. 169-170. Original version: “Det varigste, der blev skab i Axelborgtiden, var ikke de Ting, der fik størst kunstnerisk Betydning, ikke de store italienske Operagæstespil, de offentlige Orkesterkoncerter, de mange Transmissioner fra Teatre og Mødesale, men “Familien Hansen”. De andre Ting lever i manges Minde, men Familien er en Virkelighed, der baade glæder og ærgrer - som alle Familier.”

had the benefit of addressing a readership, who probably knew the basic information about the series, such as the actors involved, the writer, the storyline etc. This meant that he could easily focus on a minor anecdote without further introduction. In the next sentence, he moves on to positioning THF opposite the more artistic output of the DBC as if to protect himself from criticism and point out the value in entertainment programming. Artistic experiments are all very good but in the end, the show that returns every week with the same characters is the one that stays with the listeners (and not only because it was still playing at the time). He concluded with the double claim that “the family is a reality that causes joy and sorrow - just like all other families”. On one hand defining the aesthetic of THF as mimetic (“the family is a reality...just like all other families”) and on the other referring to the two-sided reception it had received as well as the emotional ups and downs the audience gladly went on along with THF (“causes joy and sorrow”). The choice of describing THF as a “reality” is quite a bold one, considering the fact that almost all other sources are content with referring to it as a *reflection* of reality. It does however explain the success it had as a direct consequence of its “relatability”. This was not a show that put on airs it was simply about a family like any other. The main content of the paragraph that follows Werner’s opening, is an anecdote about one example of listeners opposing to THF in *Radiolytteren* as early as 1929.⁴³⁸ It concerns a particular encouragement written in verse suggesting that Locher kill *The Hansen Family*. The anecdote reappears in other sources too⁴³⁹, even if it is slightly misleading. Two weeks after the murderous complaint, the editorial team behind *Radiolytteren* humorously admitted having ordered and penned the complaint in order to encourage the audience’s counter-reactions. It is no surprise that this kind of inverted agitation for THF appeared in *Radiolytteren*, since Locher enjoyed steady support from the conservative press to which the magazine belonged. As mentioned before, it was published by *Berlingske Tidende* for which Locher worked for several years in the 1930s. In Werner’s case, the anecdote mainly shows how many listeners THF managed to engage and therefore indirectly stated that the DBC was fulfilling its duty towards a wide audience. The next anniversary publication arrived in 1950

⁴³⁸ Comedic Poem in: *Radiolytteren*, 12.10.1929.

⁴³⁹ E.g. Ahm, Leif: *En verden i lyd og billeder. Dansk radio & tv fra krystalapparat til Video-kassette*, Lademann, Copenhagen, 1972. P. 44. AND Kjersgaard, Erik, et al.: “Så bringer vi ”Familien Hansen”” in: *Fogtdals Illustreret Tidende. Billeder af danskerens liv*, ed. 3, 1996. P. 30.

(DBC25), when the DBC celebrated 25 years of broadcasting, and once more, THF was mentioned.

DBC25

The two-volume publication arrived one year after THF had ended and hence was still addressing an audience that would have been able to remember THF. However, the series did not receive much focused treatment in the book but was mentioned here and there as part of the overall history of the first 25 years of the DBC. Where the first publication was divided into different themes, four of six chapters in this book are ordered chronologically. The anecdotal nature of the texts is slightly reduced in comparison to the first DBC book and instead it consists of a linear retelling of history. This also influences the orientation of the different chapters and the way in which THF is included in them. There are three “longer” references to THF distributed over three chapters. The first is in the chapter covering the early period of the DBC, and it sums up THF in seven lines: That it was introduced in the fall of 1929⁴⁴⁰, listing the names of the three main actors and then:

These small situations achieved enormous popularity. The problems, sorrows and joys of everyday life were treated in a light tone. This series continued week after week, unimpinged by whatever else happened, until 1949 - when death brought it to a halt.⁴⁴¹

Again the popularity and durability of the series are highlighted, only this time it is in a chapter otherwise devoted to radio during WWII. There is an implicit reference to the fact that THF continued in spite of the German occupation, which had not yet taken place at the time of the first publication (DBC15). This short text is part of a longer run through of the year of 1929 so THF is only mentioned in passing.

⁴⁴⁰ While it may not have become a stable until the fall of 1929, it did in fact debut on 2 April with approx. nine more episodes aired until September. The same mistake is made in the memoirs of Emil Holm.

⁴⁴¹ Op.cit. DBC25, p. 51. Original version: “Disse smaa situationer opnåede en enorm popularitet. Dagliglivets problemer, sorger og glæder blev her behandlet i en let lystspilstone. Denne serie fortsatte uge efter uge, uanfægtet af alt, hvad der ellers skete, til 1949 - da døden satte et punktum for den.”

The next appearance of THF in DBC25 is a photograph taken on the day when the 500th episode was recorded, and Locher and his wife joined the cast for a day. Photographs from the same occasion reappear in three further publications from 1972, 1975, and 1996, which indicates at least three points. Firstly, reaching the 500th episode was quite an accomplishment and underlined THF's status as an institution. Secondly, the doubling of the popular real-life Locher couple (who often appeared in ladies magazines), and the fictional Hansen couple along with the M-i-l was quite iconic. Thirdly, it may also simply be a sign that only few photographs were taken of the cast.

The third and final appearance of THF is in the chapter about the rebuilding of the free radio after the war. It is simply a statement about the end of the serial in connection to another popular show that also ended in the late 1940s:

They are mentioned here because they represented Danish humour and good-natured irony in each their way - and that is exactly the reason they were listened to so widely.⁴⁴²

The interesting detail here is the first mention of THF in DBC25 as a particularly Danish phenomenon. The reason the cancelling of the series is even mentioned in a chapter about postwar radio, is that THF played an important part in representing a certain aspect of Danishness (the humour). This representational quality connected to Danish national identity is repeated in many sources, a fact which I will return to below in a discussion of THF as a "reflection". First, I will turn my attention to the 50th anniversary publication of the DBC, called *De musiske udsendelser* (DMU).

DMU

This time, the publication consisted of three volumes covering music, radio theatre and TV theatre. The focus was on radio *and* television, and on how broadcasting had contributed towards making cultural products available to the common man. This influenced the orientation of the text, making it less anecdotal and more focused on aesthetic description. THF is mentioned twice in volume I (dedicated to radio theatre,

⁴⁴² Ibid. p. 319. Original version: "De nævnes her fordi de på forskellig måde var udtryk for dansk lune og godmodig ironi - netop derfor blev de aflyttet så meget."

music and TV theatre), the first time in a proper paragraph and the second time in connection to the work of Roving. Only accompanied by the 500th episode photograph, the text narrows in on the linguistic aspects of Locher's work, the depiction of Danish vernacular as if taken "straight out of everyday life".⁴⁴³ This is linked to the central position of the spoken word in radio drama in general and put into context with the other types of language depicted on the DBC: "high speech, great poetry, vernacular and everyday situations, it was all there from the very first broadcasts of the radio theatre in adapted stage dramas and original radio drama."⁴⁴⁴ In this way THF certainly had its place and played an important part in delivering varied language and reflections of real life. The fact that the book was published 26 years after the series was taken off the air also allows the author to put THF into a media historical context. It is described as a precursor to the then contemporary everyday programmes, the serial radio comedy *Karlsens Kvarter* (mentioned in chapter 4.5.) and the television series *Huset på Christianshavn* (DBC, 1970-77). The second appearance of THF in DMU mainly serves to complete the short biography of Roving with an attention to genre, particular actors, descriptions of characters and other details from printed radio programmes.

From nostalgia to curiosity

As will be obvious by now the anniversary publications were, to a large extent, characterised by collegial familiarity and anecdotal knowledge, and yet they contain invaluable information about early Danish radio history. However, there is another category of texts in which THF is mentioned: popular history. Although there are only two such examples, I have chosen to separate them from the DBC publications as they have a markedly different approach to THF. The first is the coffee table book *En verden i lyd og billeder* (A world in sound and images) written by media journalist Leif Ahm in 1972⁴⁴⁵ and the second one is a popular history publication called *Fogtdals Illustreret Tidende* from 1996.⁴⁴⁶ Both were written several decades after THF ended, describing

⁴⁴³ Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend: "Stemmer i æteren" in: DMU. Pp. 178-205. Quotation from p. 200. Original version: "lige ud af dagligdagen".

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid. Original version: "Høj tale, stor digtning, hverdagssprog og dagligsituation, det var der altsammen fra første færd i radioteatrets udsendelser af omsat scenedrama og originalt hørespil [...]."

⁴⁴⁵ Op.cit. Ahm (1972).

⁴⁴⁶ Op.cit. Kjersgaard et al. (1996).

the phenomenon as a distant memory and making use of many source materials to describe the THF institution.

As indicated in the book title, Ahm's interest lies with broadcasting in general, which is described as a world of wonder. At this point (1972) television had conquered the Danish media scene and radio was seen as an outdated medium. Yet, THF receives one spread with two large photographs (one of them from the above mentioned 500th episode and the other part of the montage above), a half-page excerpt from the very first episode and two small letters from listeners, representing a positive and a negative review. As indicated above, this abundance of documentation reveals that Ahm is addressing a readership that may not be familiar with THF or who may need a little help remembering. This is an early depiction of "the good old days of radio when everything was so much simpler" and the audience was entertained by a single family and their everyday quarrels. The text consists of a chronologically ordered chain of entertaining trivia about the series with⁴⁴⁷, quotations from the memoirs of Director-General Holm⁴⁴⁸, a quaintly absurd complaint from the pianoforte society concerning the depiction of the piano as being superfluous at the Hansens, as well as a seething critique by Henningsen. Thus balancing positive and negative feedback it describes THF as a light-hearted entertainment programme, which nevertheless managed to provoke very different reactions from its listeners.

The same nostalgic approach is taken even further in *Illustreret Tidende*, which was a series of magazines devoted to different periods in Danish history. This particular edition covers the 1930s with subjects such as unemployment, a story of some famous quadruplets, a con artist known as "The drilling X", Aksel Sandemose, author of the book containing the legendary Jante Law etc (see chapter 4.1.). In the THF spread there are even more images than in Ahm's text, including a cover of the THF comic strip from the 1940s and an excerpt from the manuscript with an illustration. Apart from two photographs of the actors there is a further photograph of an ordinary Danish family posing in their living room next to their radio set. This is an interesting visualisation of

⁴⁴⁷ All of which were used in a short introduction to the THF phenomenon on the DBC radio programme called *Danmark Kort* from 15.04.2009.

⁴⁴⁸ See paragraph below about THF as a "reflection".

the notion of THF as a reflection of real life, something which is also referred to in the caption: "The pleasure [...] was in "peeking through one's own windows" and seeing one's daily life translated into comedy."⁴⁴⁹ The same point is mentioned several times in different incarnations: "...was something most people could identify with", "This is exactly how people spoke and quarrelled in the average Danish family" and "The lines were taken out of everyday life [...]"⁴⁵⁰ Evidently, it was important to explain the success of THF in order to make it a curiosity worth mentioning close to 50 years later. All in all, the spread covers not only THF as a radio programme, but also as a social phenomenon with comic strips and ritualised reception.

The *Illustreret Tidende* article contains some of the same anecdotes and photographs as Werner's and Ahm's texts, though with more details. This kind of recycling of information across the different sources is a general trait that points to a lack of original research and a widespread absence of source critique. Many of them uncritically repeat the listeners' identification with THF and expressions such as "the average Danish family" are used uncritically. Finally, the kill-THF-prank that was created by *Radiolytteren* in 1929 continues to resurface.

THF in memoirs

So far I have only come across one indication of the official strategy behind THF in the memoirs of Director-General Holm, who occupied this position for the first 8 years of THF. Two years after he had left the DBC and halfway through the 20-year run of THF, Holm reminisced:

In the fall of 1929, episodes of Jens Locher's comedic "situations" were first broadcast under the name "The Hansen Family", and it has remained popular with thousands upon thousands of Danish listeners through the years in spite of opposition from several directions. From the beginning it was supposed to reflect the experiences of young families today, especially the current ones and "The Hansen Family" (...) soon achieved a popularity that was

⁴⁴⁹ Kjersgaard et al. (1996), p. 31. Original version: "Fornøjelsen var [...] at "kigge ind ad sine egne vinde'ver" og se sit daglige liv oversat til komedie."

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. Original version: "[...] var noget de fleste kunne identificere sig med." (p. 30), "Netop sådan talte og småskændtes man i den danske gennemsnitsfamilie." (p. 30). "Replikkerne var taget ud af dagligdagen [...]" (p. 31).

unprecedented in this country. Before that time, "Mr Sørensen" was the common name for the average man in Denmark, but he has been completely replaced by "The Hansen Family". It is surprising and a testament to the ability of the radiophony to connect people and places that this family is just as appreciated in Southern Jutland and on the Jutlandic heath as in the narrow districts of Copenhagen; it is about typical city-dwellers, but the province has also acknowledged it as talk of its talk, well, a young and voluptuous peasant wife from Jutland once told me happily how she knew very well that "The Hansen Family" was about her and her husband.⁴⁵¹

Using Holm's memoirs as a source to the institutional practices at the DBC one must take into account that at this point, he was writing his legacy and therefore may have had reason to embellish the story.⁴⁵² Apart from the natural flaws of memory, he may also have felt the need to legitimise the broadcasting of such a light programme as THF by exaggerating the national appeal of the serial. There is something about the tale of the voluptuous peasant wife that seems a little too convenient, but further evidence suggests that he might actually have been right.⁴⁵³ Either way, there are two important points worth noting in the Holm quotation. The most important one is his description of THF as a reflection and the second one is his use of the series as a prime example of radio's (and the "radiophony's") ability to make connections on a national scale. The former is in line with Locher's article from 1929 with its emphasis on reflection and topicality. The latter is very much the former Director-General speaking, whose main concern was to make sure Danes everywhere felt addressed by the DBC. By broadcasting a national self-image, the DBC helped the Danish population see what it had in common across financial, geographical or societal differences.

⁴⁵¹ Op.cit. Holm (1939), pp. 100-101. Original version: "I Efteraaret 1929 begyndte Udsendelser af Jens Locher's Lystspil-Situationer under Titlen *Familien Hansen*, der trods Modstand fra forskellige Hold har bevarer deres Popularitet gennem Aarene hos Tusinder og Tusinder af danske Lyttere. Det var fra første Færd Hensigten, at de skulde genspejle vor Tids unge Familiers Oplevelser, ikke mindst de aktuelle, og "Familien Hansen" (...) opnaaede hurtigt en Popularitet, som ikke er set før her i Landet. "Hr. Sørensen" var før den Tid Betegnelsen for den jævne Mand i Danmark, men han er nu helt afløst af "Familien Hansen". Forbavsende er det, og vidnende om Radiofoniens Evne til at forbinde Egne og Mennesker, at denne Familie er lige saa gouteret i Sønderjylland og på Jyllands Hede som i Københavns tætte Kvarterer; det er jo typiske Byboere, der skrives om, men Provinsen har ogsaa anerkendt den som Tale af sin Tale, ja en yngre frodig Bondekone i Jylland sagde en Gang glad til mig, at hun godt vidste, at "Familien Hansen" var skrevet om hende og hendes Mand."

⁴⁵² A similar point is made by Poulsen (2006), p. 63.

⁴⁵³ The press coverage of THF in Jutlandic newspapers was rather substantial, indicating that there was indeed a wide THF-audience in that part of Denmark. As mentioned in chapter 5.4., the radio critic "Z" from *Vestkysten Esbjerg* from Jutland was by far the most prolific.

Holm did not spend much time detailing what kind of opposition THF met, but focuses on the anecdote about the peasant woman. However, former radio reporter Dahlerup revealed a bit more in his memoirs *Radio-Eventyr* (radio-tales) from 1968: "One thing caused a stir - far beyond the borders of Denmark - exactly because of its apparent endurance."⁴⁵⁴ Dahlerup related the reason for this to the critique of the serial:

There was a lot more complaining then than nowadays - from critics as well as from the audience. The reason was that the single episode was often a mere trifle - even annoyingly thin at times - but the whole, the chain, turned into an identification with the quarrels and minor worries of this family, which absolutely charmed the audience, who were delighted to recognise their own lives in it.⁴⁵⁵

In Dahlerup's view the critique was directed at the single episode, whereas the whole was much larger than the sum of its parts. It was the gradual layering of co-experience, the many years of co-existence with THF that represented its true value and the precision of the lines and lightness of the dialogue only added to its merits. Furthermore, Dahlerup concluded that the insistence on repetition "in times that called for new things every time" was particularly remarkable.

THF as a "reflection"⁴⁵⁶

Repeated over and over again in the different sources, "a reflection" is the most consistent description of THF: that the series reflected the reality of many young families of its day. At times it is used almost literally as a reflection or a mirror image of the listeners' reality. At other times it is the image of peeking through one's own windows. Interestingly, the same expression was used by Henningsen, who, as I have

⁴⁵⁴ Dahlerup, Aksel: *Radio-Eventyr*, Lohses Forlag, Copenhagen, 1968. Pp. 131. Original version: "En ting vakte opsigt - langt ud over Danmarks grænser - netop ved sin tilsyneladende uopslidelighed."

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. pp. 132-32. Original version: "Der blev skældt mere ud, end man rigtigt kender det i dag - såvel fra kritikernes som fra publikums side. Det lå i, at den enkelte var en bagatel - ligefrem irriterende tynd til tider - men helheden, kæden, blev til en indleven i denne families småskænderier og småbekymringer, som aldeles charmerede publikum, der henrykt genkendte deres egen tilværelse deri."

⁴⁵⁶ As mentioned before, this expression is often used about THF, but similar images of reflection and mirroring also appear in the more general literature on radio serials, such as in Skoog (2010), p. 188 AND Wade (1981), p. 103. However, there were also other, much less "mimetic" aspects to the series. Since it was a comedy, there were several examples of episodes that made use of extensive, at times even absurd, exaggerations. E.g. the episode *Massage* (09.03.1949), which I have mentioned before, in which G massages Å's large back with a rolling pin and some margarine, while he is lying prostrate on a table.

mentioned before, was one of THF's most ardent critics. He used it as an example of what to avoid as a public institution - the simple reflection that would only lull the audience to sleep instead of awakening their minds to critical reflection. Not quite a reflection but still a recognisable image, the window metaphor has an added aspect of distance to it. It implies that the spectator is aware of a larger distance from the spectacle than from the mirror image. While the image of the "reflection" is closely linked to the rhetorics of national radio ("we must reflect the realities of our listeners"), the window metaphor in a Danish context is some times mentioned with reference to the 19th century comedy *Genboerne* by Danish playwright Jens Christian Hostrup. However, exactly who is reflected or looking at themselves through a window is often left to the imagination. How could any of the above-mentioned commentators claim to know to what extent the listeners identified themselves with THF? Or whether they were merely amused by the silliness on display? As has already been discussed, Locher sought to depict characteristics rather than imitate reality directly, even venturing into the absurd at times. So it must be that what is reflected is a kind of common human denominator, behavioral patterns, universal gender issues and so on. It is not the single listener but something or someone who might as well have been them, or, seen in a power perspective, someone they ought to become. As was mentioned above as well as in chapter 5.4., not everyone was equally enamoured with the idea of the DBC simply reflecting, or even *falsely* reflecting its audience's lives and views. The more radical critics, and Henningsen in particular, were directly opposed to this and so it is interesting to see the same window metaphor he used, appear in a promotional text on the back cover of the 1944 book of THF manuscripts:

In this comprehensive radio drama series the average Dane is depicted in his quiet everyday existence, with his good and bad habits, his quirks and positive spirit. With "The Hansen Family", which has now become available in book form for the first time, we can peek through our own windows, and who wouldn't want to do that?⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Op.cit. Locher (1944). Back cover. Original version: "I denne omfattende Hørespil-Serie skildres Gennemsnitsdanskere, saadan som han i al Skikkelighed lever fra Dag til Dag med sine Vaner og Uvaner, sit gode Humør og sine Særheder. Gennem "Familien Hansen", som nu for første Gang faas i Bogform, kan vi kigge ind ad vore egne Vinduer, og hvem har ikke Lyst til det?"

This displays quite clearly how self-evident the narcissistic pleasure in THF seemed to the majority of the people commenting on the serial. There was neither any question whether or not the serial reflected "the real lives" of ordinary people nor whether that is what they wanted from the DBC. Finally, as we saw in chapter 2.2. the reflection is as closely associated with the purpose of the (family) serial in general, as it is to THF. Hence, it is used in the literature concerning Swedish, American, and British serials, and no doubt many other national broadcasting histories.

The last category of THF-references is the academic coverage, which approaches the series in three different ways: As an inconsequential piece of entertainment (DMH), as an integral part of media historical developments (Agger), and as a prime example of what can be achieved with popular content (Björck).

Academic attention

The four-volume edition of *Dansk Mediehistorie* (Danish media history) is a comprehensive treatment of Danish media history 1840-2003, with contributions from some of Denmark's most prominent media scholars. The edition tends to favour artistic experiments, unique events, and media historical "revolutions" over affirmative everyday programmes and in this sense reveals an underlying leftist tendency often expressed in Danish cultural studies. While there are quite a few side remarks and comparisons containing THF, the main reference is a long caption to a THF comic strip (as opposed to a paragraph in the main text) that was used as an advertisement for a medical product. The reason for mentioning THF here is as an example of a kind of "cross promotion" where advertisers used characters from popular radio shows. A notable difference between this inclusion of THF and the ones I have discussed so far is the use of quotation marks in the following excerpt:

It depicted "typically Danish" everyday situations with a disarming display of the minor marital controversies, the battles with the mother-in-law and the problem of correcting "the darn children".⁴⁵⁸

Not only is there an editorial distancing from THF (the series is only mentioned in a caption, separated from the main text), there is also a linguistic distancing from the canonical use of the likes of "reflection", "window-peeking" and national imagery without entering the discussion. Simultaneously this reveals the complexities of an expression such as something "typically Danish", since the notion is of course as much of a construction as THF was.

In her extensive study on Danish tv-drama, Agger (2005) mentions THF as a conservative predecessor to the more cultural-radically informed radio family serial *Karlsens Kvarter* as well as of the tv-series about a married couple, *Parløb* (DBC, 1990-92). She mainly discusses the different roles played by the spouses, and describes Aage Hansen as the one who ultimately sets the slightly confused Gerda straight.⁴⁵⁹ While I do not agree with this assessment as my thesis so far will have shown, there is a definite development in the depiction of gender roles from THF and onwards. In that sense, the paternalistically affectionate husband as is (sometimes) seen in THF, has already softened somewhat in *Karlsens Kvarter*. There the wife Bitten Karlsen and the outspoken daughter Tina represent an even more challenging female front opposite the idiomatic father Per Karlsen, than G and her mother and sister do in THF, since G is usually the only sensible female character, not being as prone to gossip and prejudice as the others.

At the other end of the academic spectrum is Björck (2010), whose book I have already covered. For that reason I shall only mention one central point here. Björck astutely categorises THF along with *Ingenjör Björck* as the kind of series whose objective it was to support the welfare state.⁴⁶⁰ Whether or not one agrees with this objective, it shows the important role a seemingly inconsequential everyday programme can play.

⁴⁵⁸ Op.cit. DMH, p. 187. Original version: "Den skildrede "typisk danske" hverdagssituationer med en afvæbnende fremstilling af småkontroverserne i ægteskabet, dysterne med svigermor og problemerne med afretningen af "de pokkers unger"."

⁴⁵⁹ Op.cit. Agger (2005), p. 438.

⁴⁶⁰ Op.cit. Björck (2010), p. 40.

Conclusion

From anecdotal and aesthetic references in the DBC anniversary publications, past personal agendas in memoirs, and to more or less distanced academic treatment it is still safe to say that the literature on THF is rather scarce. Many of the scattered paragraphs and short references read as echoes of each other, using the same source material and facts, most of which resound the idea of THF as a reflection or mirror image of their real life counterparts. A few other recurring themes are worth mentioning. First of all, the texts written by DBC employees show a tendency to want to legitimise THF as a valid programming choice. Meanwhile there is an unmistakeable pride in the wide reach of the series, both in terms of years and audiences. To them, it was a phenomenon, which withstood critique and even continued undiminished during WWII. Furthermore, the lightness of the series may have been damaging in the single episodes, but the series as a whole had the power to imitate real life, almost in real time and the very fact that it dealt with truly trivial matters only made it all the more "reflective". Finally, it is clear that THF as a case was simply a good radio story with plenty of colourful and impressive facts that all revealed the DBC as an institution attuned to the needs of its audiences. THF was a light programme, delivered laughter and linguistic observations, reflected familiar challenges of modern life, and caused lively debates on a regular basis. In the following chapter, I will reveal the details of how THF juggled these elements and introduced the topical issues of the day in its fictional universe.

6. The Content

Having introduced THF as a phenomenon in many of its more "circumstantial" aspects, it is now time to delve into single episodes in order to gain a deeper understanding of how current events and movements of the 1930s and 1940s were transformed in the fictional universe. Loosely inspired by John Ellis' (1999 & 2000)⁴⁶¹ concept of "working

⁴⁶¹ Op.cit. Ellis (1999) AND (2000).

through”, I will introduce my own term “re-proportioning” for the process by which that transformation is achieved. Thereby I wish to argue that the central mechanism in THF is a re-proportioning of larger events and more abstract societal developments to fit a domestic scale, thereby making them seem more relatable. In a greater perspective, this reading of THF is an example of a “strategy of relevance” at the DBC in the monopoly years (here 1925-50). This strategy is one way for a broadcasting corporation to make itself relevant by meeting the imagined needs of its listeners and reflecting that, which is, to some extent, already familiar to them. As a starting point I will briefly introduce Ellis before presenting the analytical concept of re-proportioning, which, as I have mentioned before, is based on my observations from reading the complete THF episodes from 1929, 34, 39, 44, and 49. The concept is divided into seven sub-categories, which I will also present here and subsequently apply to THF in chapter 6.2. This last chapter is the most crucial one as it will not only show the applicability of the re-proportioning concept, but also provide valuable *insight* into the THF phenomenon and by extension, into similar family serials around the Western world.

6.1. Re-proportioning

The problems of the times, be it the current or the more eternal ones, should weave through the lives of the Hansen Family as little red threads, and therefore there will be contention.⁴⁶²
(Jens Locher, 1929)

In this sense the soap opera works through news issues – not slavishly, item by item, issue by issue, but by providing narratives with resonance to the everyday experience or the prevalent thinking of their viewing publics.⁴⁶³ (John Ellis, 1999)

As should be clear by now, THF was a successful series from an early stage and seems to have remained so for most of its 20 year run. However, given its somewhat formulaic simplicity, it may seem difficult to understand how it managed to maintain this status for so many years. What was the appeal and how did it survive through a time of great upheaval without making any major changes to its format? These are some of the

⁴⁶² Op.cit. Locher (21.09.1929.) Original version: “Tidens Problemer, de være sig aktuelle eller mere evige, skal gerne gaa som smaa røde Traade gennem Familien Hansens Liv, og derfor bliver der Strid.”

⁴⁶³ Op.cit. Ellis (1999), p. 60.

questions that I have been preoccupied with, and which I initially tried to approach with inspiration from Ellis' (1999, 2000) work on the nature of television. His central concept of "working through" bears a resemblance to the mechanism seen in the THF manuscripts. It inspired me to start looking closer at how THF "worked through" current events. That is how my own concept of "re-proportioning" came into being, partly inspired by Ellis and firmly set in my close reading of THF. Yet as the analyses evolved along with the concept of re-proportioning, they moved in another direction and further away from Ellis. For these reasons I will start by introducing the concept of working through briefly as well as describing its relationship to re-proportioning before moving on to a more detailed introduction of the latter and its seven sub-categories.

What is "working through"?

Ellis first introduced the concept of working through in *Television as Working-Through* and developed his ideas further in the book *Seeing Things. Television in the Age of Uncertainty* from 2000. The central claim in both is that television as a whole is a source of frustration and relief in the sense that it delivers all of the world's misery on screen and helps the audience work through it:

Television can be seen as a vast mechanism for processing the material of the witnessed world into more narrativized, explained forms. The term "working through" is drawn deliberately from psychoanalysis where it describes the process whereby material is continually worried over until it is exhausted.⁴⁶⁴

By choosing this psychoanalytic term as a theoretical reference point for an exploration of the television medium, Ellis adds a therapeutic dimension to the televisual experience. When watching the news, the audience is inundated with images of horror and an abundance of information about places and events of much or little relevance to their everyday lives. This overload is transformed into something less stifling and more productive by being worked through the different formats of the medium. The information first appearing in the news, trickles down through the different formats such as talk and chat programmes and the narrative formats of documentary and

⁴⁶⁴ Op.cit. Ellis (2000), pp. 78-9.

drama, each of which presents its own rhetorical, speculative, psychological, personal, educational, entertaining etc. approach.

In the big picture this working through not only pertains to the particular content of television news but also to the world in general. By containing the chaos of everyday perceptions in a controlled environment, by working through multiple scenarios in a safe arena, television offers a survival lesson for what Ellis calls “the age of uncertainty” at the turn of the millennium.

Working through vs. re-proportioning

This holistic approach to the mechanism of television was, as I mentioned above, a source of inspiration to me. However, working with THF called for a concept, which narrowed in on the serial format as more than just one step in a long process. Furthermore, the current thesis is less focused on the “therapeutic” effects of THF, and more on the narrative “topical” strategies in the single episodes. That is why I have developed the concept of re-proportioning as it will allow me to explore how a kind of working-through takes place within one genre and through one single example of this, i.e. THF. Working-through describes the way in which news material trickles down through the different genres of television, thus helping the audience deal with overexposure to all sorts of information in modern life. Re-proportioning on the other hand is a collection of narrative strategies, which create local incarnations of real life news/trends in the single story lines of THF. Thus, re-proportioning describes the process by which larger events in the world are rescaled to fit domestic proportions within the THF narrative and by doing so, tries to make politics, events, people, isms, philosophies etc. seem more relevant to the audience in their everyday lives. Although there may also be therapeutic aspects to this process, I have chosen to focus on this “strategy of relevance” as a more or less conscious way for the DBC to legitimise its activities to the licence-fee paying audience and fulfil its public service obligations. This “courting” of the audience is what I compared to Scannell's (1996) idea of the “care-structures” of broadcasting in chapter 1.

Investigating the re-proportioning practices of THF as a whole makes it possible to highlight a central tension in the material. On the one hand is a fictional universe where the main characters hardly develop as psychological individuals and there is no sense of a larger coherent storyline. On the other hand, this cyclical universe is constantly challenged by changes taking place in the real world and a clear sense that time does pass in spite of its apparent immobility in THF. Unemployment, bombings, fashions, holidays - all come and go without leaving a serious mark on the characters in the serial. This contradiction may not be exclusive to THF⁴⁶⁵, but what has yet to be explored in depth is how these two timelines can coexist. In other words: how is the reality of the living world between 1929 and 1949 reflected in the cyclical universe of THF? One of the main claims in this thesis is that there is a constant process of re-proportioning taking place between real life events and the story lines of THF. This process is absolutely central to THF's mode of address and narrative structuring, and so, I claim, is it to much other (fictional) content in public service broadcasting.

As mentioned, I have identified seven categories of re-proportioning in my selection of THF manuscripts. Each represents a different way of introducing topical material into the narrative as well as varying degrees of topicality from extremely specific events or names to general trends or movements in the broadcasting period of THF (1929-49). It is very important to point out that they are not mutually exclusive and several of these narrative strategies can and do coexist in the same manuscript. Furthermore, it is not meant as an exhaustive list, but it does represent the most common kinds of re-proportioning categories in the more than 200 episodes, I have read. In the following I will present the characteristics and narrative purposes of the categories such as I have observed them in the THF material. These categories will serve as the theoretical framework for the seven content analyses carried out in chapter 6.2. where I will show how re-proportioning works on the narrative and textual levels in THF.

⁴⁶⁵ The same pattern can be observed in numerous serials such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, which are both ripe with references to the real, living and changing world and yet the characters never age and they always return to their old selves even after excessive adventures. E.g. Homer Simpson, whose IQ is increased dramatically in one episode, when a crayon is removed from his brain. He eventually puts the crayon back into his nostril so he no longer feels alienated from his own life.

1) Direct re-proportioning

This first category is probably the least controversial and most obvious of them all. It refers to instances when a direct parallel is drawn between the national and the domestic levels and is akin to the classic metaphor of the nation as an extended family for whom the king or the political leader represents a father figure.⁴⁶⁶ The link between the two levels is often made in THF in order to address the conscience of the single citizen or the family as a whole in the nation state.⁴⁶⁷ It points to the importance of the nuclear family as the cornerstone of any financially stable society. What happens on the domestic level has a bearing on events at the national level and therefore every single family has an obligation to contribute towards the larger community. In this sense, “direct re-proportioning” is closely related to the “commissions” category below, because it is also meant to encourage participation in something, which benefits society as a whole. The only two aspects separating direct re-proportioning from the commissions category are the fact that the latter seems to have been directly commissioned, and refers to a particular event. Though there are very few examples of direct re-proportioning it is important to cover it separately as it also serves as a description of the overall objective of THF. One stellar example is *Planøkonomi* (Planned Economy)⁴⁶⁸, where Å & G are discussing how to incorporate planned economy in their household, an episode, which I will return to in chapter 6.2.1.

By looking at this single example, the negative side effects of re-proportioning stand out quite clearly. When national concerns are reduced to domestic squabbles, it removes focus from the larger issues at hand. Not only does this kind of re-proportioning in a narrative reduce international events to national concerns, it also narrows the focus even further to the immediate surroundings of the listeners. Or reversely, if a news story does not affect the daily life of the Hansens, it is not worth mentioning. Instead of widening the horizons of the listeners, it is affirming them in their existing beliefs by

⁴⁶⁶ This parallel works on two levels. One is the metaphorical way in which the single household is used as a microcosm of the nation and the other is the metonymic level, which refers to the very real duties of the household towards the nation. However, in the current chapter and chapter 6.2.1. in particular, I will be addressing these levels simultaneously rather than separately as the differentiation does not have any bearing on the analysis.

⁴⁶⁷ A few examples of this linking of levels: Moores, Shaun: *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000. Pp. 50-52 AND Björck (2010).

⁴⁶⁸ *Planøkonomi*, 05.11.1939.

showing them only that which is immediately recognisable. On this level, the conservatism of Locher's project reveals itself: underneath all of the discussions, he did not *really* challenge the existing order, rather, he preferred to merely reflect the world as he saw it. Therein lay the key to the criticism brought forth by Henningsen, which I covered in chapter 4.3.

Finally, the structure of direct re-proportioning makes the individual's responsibility towards society particularly clear by drawing direct parallels. This does not, however, prevent the mechanism from being employed in a more ambiguous manner such as is the case in the aforementioned *Planned Economy*.

2) Commissions

In an interview from 1949 Locher stated that he was often approached by different public authorities, who wanted him to cover particular events in THF or encourage the public to perform a certain action:

If there is an election, the Prime Minister's Office orders a "The Hansen Family" with an election in it, so the couch voters can be kicked into action, and if state loans are taken, the Ministry of Finance asks that the subject be discussed. And I am flattered.⁴⁶⁹

Whether this was a general agreement or a more recent development in the later years of THF is unclear, but there are plenty of topics in the manuscripts which correspond with this idea in the sense that several episodes are concerned with matters of an almost conspicuous degree of topicality and information. Hence the episodes about tax forms (23.12.1929, 20.01.1935), using peat (15.10.1939), partaking in house guard drills (03.12.1939), and *Pulterkammerrydning* (Attic Clearing, 05.02.1939) about a government initiative to help ordinary citizens clean out their attics (I will return to this in chapter 6.2.2.). On a few occasions, the topics even suggest a collaboration between Sweden and Denmark. On 13 May 1939 there was an episode dedicated to air raid drills in the Swedish series *Ingenjör Björck med familj*, and on 3 December the DBC ran a

⁴⁶⁹ Op.cit. (author unknown, 06.03.1949), p. 15. Original version: "Skal der være Valg, beder Statsministeriet om en "Familien Hansen" med Valg i, saa Sofavælgerne kan blive loppet op, og skal der optages Statslaan, bestiller Finansministeriet Emnet omtalt. Og jeg er smigret."

similar episode about house guards and air drills in THF. Again, on 16 September 1939, an episode of the Swedish series discussed the subject of "hoarding"⁴⁷⁰ and the next day the DBC aired a THF-episode called *Hamstring* (Hoarding). Although Alice Svensk, author of the Björck family series, claimed to have known very little of THF, when she first launched her series,⁴⁷¹ she and Locher must have developed some kind of cooperation, or at the very least, coordination, for these parallel episodes to come into being. While it may just have been a matter of individual cooperation, it also indicates common national interests of the neighbouring countries of Sweden and Denmark.⁴⁷² Skoog (2010) mentions a similar use of the BBC's soap *Mrs Dale's Diary* to further public support for different societal causes and there are numerous other examples of the practical and propagandistic uses of the serial format, as we saw in chapter 2.2.4.

Returning to the subject of re-proportioning in general, it is necessary to consider how Locher's statement about the governmental commissions relates to the theory of THF as re-proportioning. In the quotation Locher jokingly mentions that he is flattered by having been approached by the government, but he does not say to which degree he abides by their "recommendations". It seems that the most blatant examples of Locher's compliance concern rather harmless governmental encouragements that the public take an active part in society and exercise their democratic rights. These particular objectives are very much in line with the general objective of public service broadcasting as a tool for mass democracy as mentioned in connection to Stauning and Bertolt in chapter 4.3. From that point of view the commissions do not detract from anything. As early as in 1924, the BBC's Director-General Reith foresaw that broadcasting could be used to provide enlightenment for the common man so that he may use his democratic rights on an informed basis.⁴⁷³ Similarly, in Denmark public

⁴⁷⁰ Björck (2010), p. 50.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. p. 42.

⁴⁷² See Skoog (2010), p. 190.

⁴⁷³ Reith, J. C.: *Broadcast over Britain*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1924. P. 113: "It is probable that more debates will be held so that people may have an opportunity of listening to outstanding exponents of conflicting opinions on the great questions political and social which are today understood by a mere fraction of the electorate, but which are of such vital importance [...] it is admittedly a serious menace to the country that suffrage be exercised without first-hand and personal knowledge. An extension of the scope of broadcasting will mean a more intelligent and enlightened electorate."

service broadcasting was meant to reinforce democracy as a form of government as we saw in chapter 4.3.⁴⁷⁴

So the commissions category connects THF to the general educational objective of the DBC and is therefore often of a “directional” nature in the sense that it encourages a specific action in relation to a current event. This means that even if the underlying atmosphere in the episode is contemplative such as in *Attic Clearing*⁴⁷⁵ it still points forward in time and is by definition very current for the encouragement to make sense. Finally, I realise that the commissions category may seem out of place among the other, more openly narrative strategies. However, even if it takes its name from the more distant circumstances of the manuscript production, the missionary nature does have a bearing on the narrative possibilities of the material. By taking commissions, Locher had a further incentive to be ahead of time and create a topical and specific story line when writing the episode several weeks in advance (see chapter 5.1.). Naturally he could also have predicted on his own that an election or another initiative would spark interest in the future. Still, being briefed ahead (as one would expect he was) as well as introducing levels of information in the manuscripts that might otherwise be foreign to the THF style provided the possibility of engaging with the audience in a different manner. Furthermore, it was a way of establishing THF as something more than mere entertainment, as an arena where the listeners could expect to find a comedic treatment of the important issues that linked the single household to the nation.

3) Holidays and seasons

The third category relates to the larger rhythms of THF. By this I mean how the broadcasting of a weekly series such as THF for twenty consecutive years inevitably connected its annual rhythm with that of the audience and even contributed to the structuring of their daily routines along with other programmes like Scannell (1996) pointed out. While I agree with Scannell that his concept of “dailiness” as a care-structure is central to broadcasting, I also claim that the strategy of relevance (which

⁴⁷⁴ 15 years after THF ended it was even stated explicitly in the publication rules of 1964 that any broadcast critique of democracy must be followed by a counter-argument as a direct result of WWII.

⁴⁷⁵ See analysis in chapter 6.3.2.

expresses itself as re-proportioning in THF) is fundamental to much of public service broadcasting. This is seen most clearly in the holidays and seasons category, which combines the rhythmic and the re-proportioning aspects of THF in one.

As the name of this category clearly states, it refers to episodes dedicated to a particular holiday or other seasonal "events. Not only does it recount the (holiday) rituals already performed in Denmark around the time of the broadcast, it often discusses these rituals as something particularly Danish and thus has a descriptive as well as a normative function. On a larger scale, covering holidays and seasons on THF adds an annual rhythm to the series which allows the memories of Christmases and Easters past to accumulate along with the listeners' own holiday memories. In short, it is a very powerful category for the identification with the characters in THF and from a broadcasting point of view, a useful tool to secure listener loyalty. The most frequent themes in this category include birthdays, springtime/Easter, Christmas, and the central occasion of New Year's Eve, which often featured discussions of financial difficulties and philosophical musings about life and the year gone by.⁴⁷⁶ A break from the repetitiveness of everyday life and in themselves an annual, though not necessarily consistent, repetition, they often contain the characters' reflections on the importance of rituals⁴⁷⁷, sometimes with a serious note and at other times reflected as a satire on man's slavish adherence to the rules of tradition. Surprisingly the insistence on tradition-as-normalcy is not just a fixed idea belonging to the older generation in THF, but it is also clearly expressed by the twins as we shall see in my analyses of a Christmas and a birthday episode in chapter 6.2.3.

4) Trends

This category has a wider scope than "specifics" time wise (see category below), though not quite as wide as "movements" which I will present shortly. By "trends" I mean

⁴⁷⁶ E.g. the episodes from 31.12.1933, no. 199 1934, 01.01.1939, 31.12.1944, and 04.01.1949.

⁴⁷⁷ By "ritual" I mean a predetermined set of actions connected to a certain occasion, e.g. having a roast goose or decorating the tree in a particular order at Christmas. The connection between rituals, their performance, and the occasion is governed by the historical and often arbitrary legitimacy of "tradition". This in turn may be embedded in religious or secular belief systems.

phenomena that are characteristic of or appearing during a certain span of years and which by default are either passing fads or turn into accepted canonised truths in time. Common trends in THF are functionalism as expressed in architecture and interior decoration (e.g. 22.04.1934 AND 01.10.1934), the “cult” of the slender and athletic figure (06.09.1930), the latest health schemes such as eating raw vegetables only (*Raakost*, undated 1930) or keeping the windows open for fresh air even in winter time (*Kuldemetode* (The Chilling Method, 15.04.1934 - see chapter 6.2.4.). Where the specifics (see further below) are often extraneous to the narrative, the trends occupy a much more central position even as part of the title of the episode if there is one. This is often used as the source of comedy as there is plenty of material for commentary in the novelty of the trends and the blind obedience that often follows. A main point here is that trends are an option and not something that is forced on the individual and therefore still offers freedom of choice, meaning that the choice to follow it can be criticised in THF if it is not made on a sufficiently informed basis. This last characteristic is what differentiates trends from movements most clearly. As many of the above examples as well as the analysis in chapter 5.3. show, this category is much more frequent in the early 1930s and reveal an optimism towards modernity in spite of the Depression.

5) Movements

While the trends were legitimate comedic targets in a THF, and even a general DBC context, the “movements” are anything but. Another defining trait is that they are not necessarily visible on the surface of the text. They refer to much larger movements or historical developments with more serious consequences than the mere trends, which often allows them to remain as silent undercurrents to the narrative. Because of their sheer expanse in time and space, the movements cannot be contained within a single episode, but must rear their heads from time to time and in different incarnations throughout THF. In that sense they add a more fundamental level of experience underneath the superficial events passing through the Hansen universe. One way of identifying the movements in the manuscripts is by the linguistic markers that usually tie the textual surface to the undercurrents. Expressions such as “in these times”, “nowadays”, and “today” implicitly refer to movements such as unemployment, the

depression, rationing, and modernity or simply to an understood and shared experience of living at a particular time. One example is a quotation from 1929: "I'm so sad and worried, for it isn't very easy to find a new position in these times"⁴⁷⁸, by which Å refers to the difficulties of living and working in interwar Denmark. I will return to this quotation as well as mention further examples of this kind of general statements in my analysis in chapter 6.2.5. Since movements are larger societal changes or general living conditions, they affect and sometimes even overrule the lives and decisions of individuals. Thus represented as a *force majeure* rather than a lifestyle choice as was the case with the trends, movements often merit a more serious treatment in THF. Furthermore, although their time span is considerably longer than in the case of trends, there is a limit to their relevance in the case of specific reference points such as unemployment (which fluctuates) or the experience of modernity (which entails other kinds of threats and challenges in the digital age than it did in the 1930s and 1940s just to mention one).

6) Nudges

During Germany's occupation of Denmark from 1940-45 there was a tendency towards discrete acts of resistance in the official media⁴⁷⁹ and the arts as one a way of avoiding censorship and building an internal sense of community. Hence some hidden messages or "nudges" and humorous critique of the occupation and the Nazi regime made their way to the public. Other kinds of nudges at the expense of authorities, celebrities and official policies were also possible, but I have limited my scope to ones referring to WWII in one way or the other. I will discuss this decision further in my analysis in chapter 6.2.6.

The same tendency towards the use of nudges was seen in the period before the war, when the press and the radio were very careful not to make any comments that might damage Denmark's international relations. These conditions make the nudges category

⁴⁷⁸ *Episode no. 4*, 1929. No date or title.

⁴⁷⁹ The illegal press on the other hand could not afford the same degree of subtlety in their communications.

problematic, as well as the fact that it takes a great deal of historical empathy to identify a nudge for certain today.

As concerns THF, any storyline that contains a particularly strong parable or concludes with a conspicuous moral, which extends beyond the local meaning is potentially a nudge. Naturally, for it to make sense as a WWII-nudge, it has to have been broadcast shortly before or during WWII and the reference should make sense in relation to that. Even if the nudges in THF may never be proven beyond doubt it is still highly plausible that Locher would have followed the general trend in the Danish press. Especially since the humorous nature of THF lent itself so willingly to double entendre. The function of poking fun at authorities and puncturing their inflated status was important for public morale during the war. Simultaneously exclusive toward the targets of criticism and inclusive of the intended audience, a nudge could strengthen an internal sense of community among the Danes. However, the success of this undertaking depended on the careful administration of textual hints. Too many or too obvious indications would render the text less subtle and expose it to censorship, and too much subtlety would make the nudge unintelligible. In my analysis I will take this into consideration by not making any final claims as to the specific nudges in the THF-manuscripts, but focus on showing how THF could have been used for such purposes.

7) Specifics

This final category covers the phenomenon of very specific references to recent events or people in the public eye on a single sentence level. Whether disconnected from the main narrative or with a relation to the larger structure, specifics are generally exchangeable for other references with similar content in case of episode reruns at a later stage. There are a few examples of this in the manuscripts, where one reference is literally deleted and replaced by another more current one, such as in the episode called *Lussingen* (The Slap)⁴⁸⁰, as I will point out in chapter 6.2.7. To be more precise, the specifics may be related to the main narrative but the very precise nature of the

⁴⁸⁰ *Lussingen*, 14.01.1934. P. 3.

references deceive one into believing that the relation is more important than it really is.

What purpose do the specifics serve then? Considering the very loose connection to the narrative, the importance must lie elsewhere. It is an easy way of connecting a universal storyline to the specific now of the audience at the time of the broadcast. This is one way of encouraging the audience's identification with THF, a frequently deployed trick in the soap and sitcom genres even to this day⁴⁸¹. As will be demonstrated in the analysis in chapter 6.2.7., there are also other ways of tying the universal to the specific, i.e. other practical uses for the specifics.

In the next sub-chapter I will apply these seven categories to specific episodes in order to describe the re-proportioning mechanism in greater detail, as well as to point out the complexity of the terms in practice. To that end I have selected some exemplary episodes, which best display the characteristics of the categories. Naturally, the specific analytical results would have differed had I chosen other, less exemplary episodes, but I am confident that the general characteristics of the categories would remain largely unchanged.

6.2. Re-proportioning in *The Hansen Family*

As mentioned above, I will now present seven exemplary analyses in order to show more clearly how the single narratives in THF were structured towards making larger societal events more relatable to the average listener. Starting with the “umbrella” category of “direct re-proportioning”, I will move on to the two most temporally fixed categories; “commissions” (fixed to a certain event) and “holidays and seasons” (fixed to a time of year). In the final four analyses I will show the categories which are

⁴⁸¹ One such example is the NBC series *30 Rock* written by Tina Fey. There the two central characters of Liz Lemon and Jack Donaghy make frequent references to prominent television and tabloid figures such as members of the Kardashian family or the reality show *Honey Boo Boo*. This has the effect of adding an extra layer of topicality, which has a very short time span and therefore must be changed from one season to the next.

characterised by their location in and relation to the THF-text; “trends” (visible as the main theme/title), “movements” (visible through linguistic markers only - otherwise undercurrents), “nudges” (preferably invisible, but hinted at with metaphors and conspicuous morals), and “specifics” (exchangeable single sentences with little or no relation to the larger narrative). It is my hope that these analyses of THF not merely serve to confirm the usefulness of the re-proportioning categories as that in itself would be a rather circular argument. I also wish to display the relative complexity and historical value of this “trifle” of a programme, which occupied but fifteen minutes of the average Dane’s week in 1929-49. Finally, I wish to argue that the categories are generalisable far beyond the specific case of THF.

6.2.1. Direct re-proportioning

In order to properly introduce the concept of re-proportioning as an analytical tool, I have chosen to open my content analysis of THF with the category which best exemplifies it: Direct re-proportioning. Even though there are few examples of direct-re-proportioning in THF, I have deliberately afforded it a separate category because of the direct correlation between the umbrella term (re-proportioning) and the category (direct re-proportioning). To this end, I will analyse the episode called *Planned Economy*⁴⁸² from 1939. It is the overtness of the re-proportioning in *Planned Economy* that makes it uniquely revealing of the mechanism as a whole. The parallel between planned economy on a national level and on the domestic level is rather explicit, while the majority of the other re-proportioning processes have a more discrete presence in THF. Furthermore, *Planned Economy* is an interesting example of how the practical purpose of this category can be inverted in the sense that it does not necessarily

⁴⁸² Op.cit. *Planøkonomi* (1939). According to Wikipedia: “A planned economy is an economic system in which decisions regarding production and investment are embodied in a plan formulated by a central authority, usually by a public body such as a government agency. Although a planned economy may be based on either centralized or decentralized forms of economic planning, it usually refers to a centrally planned economy. Central planning aims to improve productivity and coordination by enabling planners to take advantage of better information achieved through the consolidation of economic resources when making decisions regarding investment and the allocation of economic inputs.” As we shall see shortly, the centralisation of economic resources and the coordination of production and consumption are at the centre of the discussion in the selected THF-episode.

mobilise its audience for civic action. However, before I expand any further, here is an introduction to the episode.

Summary of *Planned Economy*

The episode opens in the middle of a discussion that Å & G have continued from the day before⁴⁸³. Å dared to interfere with G's budget and suggested that they introduce planned economy in their household. G is still enraged by his interference as it shows a lack of respect for and recognition of her work as a housewife, and negates the autonomy she experiences in her daily life. On the day of the episode, she reveals another reason for her anger: that she does not understand the concept of planned economy. She asks Å to explain it to her, but he evades the question until it becomes apparent that he is just as ignorant of its meaning in spite of having preached its necessity. For one, he insisted that they forego the roast goose, which it is customary to have in Denmark on "Mortens Aften" (St. Martinmas eve) in November.⁴⁸⁴ Both of them agree that it should not strain the household budget, so they are having pork instead. Shortly before their guest arrives (the M-i-l), G withdraws to the kitchen forbidding Å to enter it, and Å in turn forbids her to enter the living room. He makes a phone call to the bakery where he has apparently ordered a roast goose as a surprise. In the meantime, the M-i-l arrives and is promptly asked not to enter the living room or the kitchen and so she carries her bag into the bedroom. A moment later, Å's roast goose arrives and he proudly arranges it on the dinner table and calls the other two in to reveal his surprise. Simultaneously, G enters with another roast goose, which she also bought with her own allowance (as opposed to the household funds). Finally, the M-i-l pulls a third roast goose out of her bag. Å delivers the closing line, concluding that even if they do not know what planned economy means, they can all agree that this certainly is not it.

⁴⁸³ Interestingly, this discussion does not seem to have been aired in any recent episodes at the time, and so it may be an example of the kind of effects used to create the illusion that the family also exists in between broadcasts.

⁴⁸⁴ This negotiation of Danish rituals abounds in the holidays and seasons category, which I will cover in chapter 6.2.3.

Trespassing on the housewife's domain

This episode is a prime example of the way in which re-proportioning works as a reductive mechanism. By attempting to draw a direct parallel between national economy and the household economy, *Planned Economy* reduces a complex economic term to a metaphor consisting of three main elements: a state, supply/production, and demand/consumption. Here Å represents the state interfering with the household economy, and G is offended by the action, arguing like a liberal that Å does not have the required insight to make such an interference on her behalf. Interestingly, what she and the majority of housewives were already practicing at that point in time resembled planned economy, only where the state, production and consumption are merged into one. As mentioned in chapter 4.1., Denmark along with several other countries in Europe, had experienced years of economic difficulties and rationing (another example of state interference) in the 1930s and would continue to do so throughout the 1940s. As we saw in chapter 4.2. these conditions spurred many initiatives (and radio programmes) to encourage thrift in the local households, among other things by teaching housewives to coordinate production and consumption very closely. This fact lies at the heart of G's resentment, and so she does her utmost to keep the two levels of economy separate, something which is also noticeable in her choice of words. While desperately trying to define the term, Å says: "Planned economy and planned economy...well yes, it is sort of an expression from the state household... an expression used in the newspapers every day..."⁴⁸⁵ Even on a verbal level he clearly wishes to subsume the household economy under the state, expressed in his term "the state household". Though he admits the difficulty of applying national measures to a private household, he still stands by his decision to introduce it in their lives. Meanwhile, G insists on demarcating the two economies by using the term "the national economy" and criticising the rationale of centralised decision making:

What does planned economy in the large-scale industry have to do with you and I. [Yesterday] You relished in telling me that when there was a need for safety pins in a country, it was no use if the factories made clasps, so they all suddenly had to make safety pins, and you were

⁴⁸⁵ Op.cit. *Planned Economy*, p.7 . Original version: "Planøkonomi og Planøkonomi.. ja se, det er altsaa saadan et Udtryk fra Statshusholdningen .. et udtryk der anvendes i Aviserne hver Dag ..".

mortally offended, when I said that then there would only be a surplus of pins and too few clasps, but what do you mean by planned economy at home?⁴⁸⁶

G's main concern is that Å approaches the issue on an abstract level instead of acquainting himself with the reality of their situation. But - if he did so, his ideas would be challenged and his ignorance revealed, so he keeps evading reality, or as G puts it: "Once more you seek refuge in the higher national economy!"⁴⁸⁷ In that sense *Planned Economy* is related to episodes such as *Tørv*⁴⁸⁸ (Peat) from 1939 and *Der købes ind*⁴⁸⁹ (Shopping) from 1935, which both feature situations where Å trespasses on G's domain on a whim. In neither of the episodes does he display any knowledge of the household, and he ends up causing a disturbance, where he meant to make procedures more efficient. This is a plot structure often used in THF, which reaches its zenith in the absurd episode *Mors Dag*⁴⁹⁰ (Mother's Day) from 1939. Here, Å resorts to drastic measures in his misunderstood attempt to pamper G on Mother's Day. He sneaks some sleeping pills into her food to make her sleep as he tries to prepare a three-course dinner. While his intentions are noble, his absolute ignorance of cooking turns it into a disaster, ruining both the food and the kitchen appliances involved. Exhausted by his childish persistence, she finally asks for two more sleeping pills to get her through the day without having a nervous breakdown. A similar turn of events, though with a much more positive outcome, is seen in *Planned Economy*. Here the result is not necessarily disastrous, but it is a reversion to the opposite of Å's intent. Despite his insistence on planned economy, the final outcome resembles market economy, where a (suppressed) demand for roast goose causes an oversupply. The absence of coordination between the "production units" i.e. the three attendees at the St. Martinmas dinner, shows quite clearly why planned economy is not directly transferable to the household level. What the economic system does not account for is the "human factor", exemplified by two

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. Original version: "Hvad kommer Planøkonomien indenfor Storindustrien dig og mig ved. Du svælgede i at fortælle om, at naar der var Brug for Sikkerhedsnaale i et Land, kunde det ikke nytte, at Fabrikkerne lavede Trykhægter, saa skulde de pludselig allesammen lave Sikkerhedsnaale, og du blev dødfornærmet, da jeg sagde, at saa blev der jo bare Overflod af Naale og for faa Hægter, men hvad mener du med Planøkonomi herhjemme?"

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 8. Original version: "Nu redder du dig igen op i den højere Nationaløkonomi!"

⁴⁸⁸ *Tørv*, 15.10.1939, re-used under the title *Der fyres med Tørv igen* (Once more, they are heating with peat) on 10.11.1946. The fact that the episode was recycled in the 1940s indicates the continued attention to thrift and to helping the national economy, this time by using a Danish source of heating instead of importing coal from England.

⁴⁸⁹ *Der købes ind*, 03.03.1935, and re-used in 1941 (date unknown) and 04.07.1949.

⁴⁹⁰ *Mors Dag*, 14.05.1939.

elements: the first is the characters' attempt to surprise one another, and the second is the unexpected introduction of a secondary economy, namely their own spending money. Neither of them follows a logical rationale and they end up subverting the larger economy through private initiative. A negation of planned economy is also used in the 1935 episode *Nytaarsregningen*⁴⁹¹ (The New Year's Bill), where Å is worried about their many bills on the first day of the new year. He finally decides to do "the most planned economy-like thing", which is postponing the payments. Again, the actual meaning of the term has no bearing on the way Å uses it. Similarly to *Planned Economy*, he resorts to the literal meaning (i.e. economy with a plan), but discards it in the end by ignoring the reality of the bills.

On a more general level, *Planned Economy* reflects some of the financial concerns also present in THF-manuscripts from the 1940s as opposed to the trend-oriented 1930s. The actual origins of Å & G's financial discussion are never revealed, and there are only a few vague explanations such as "We have to save, *all of the prices are going up*, and where is all that money to come from?!"⁴⁹² and "Don't you dare to use the household money on a goose *in these times!*"⁴⁹³ Judging by the dating of the episode, November 1939, it is most likely a reaction to the beginning of WWII in September 1939 and the ensuing instability and reintroduction of rationing.

Conclusion

The concept of direct re-proportioning allows us to approach the episode as a direct projection of societal issues onto the domestic sphere. It also reveals some of the simplifications involved, since there are very real differences between the national and the household economies, the "human factor" being just one of them. There is a peculiar ambiguity in *Planned Economy*. On the semantic level, there is a refusal to properly define the term in the title. On the plot level, the term is explored, but this is only obvious to the listener with prior knowledge of planned economy. Finally, the episode

⁴⁹¹ *Nytaarsregningen* (The New Year's Bill), 07.01.1935

⁴⁹² Op.cit. *Planned Economy*, p. 6. Original version: "Men vi maa spare...alting stiger, og hvor skal Pengene komme fra?!" (My italics in the text.)

⁴⁹³ Ibid. p. 9. Original version: "Du vover ikke i disse Tider at bruge Husholdningspengene til at købe en Gaas for!" (My italics in the text.)

concludes with a negative definition, which does, however superficially, inform the listener about the phenomenon. Thus, *Planned Economy* oscillates between delivering public service information and slightly ridiculing those very obligations. While the episode does not stray far from the fundamental conservative tendency (the avoidance of change), it remains unclear what the message is in the end. For all its simplifications and distortions, *Planned Economy* manages to create a space for reflection that leaves the conclusion to the listeners. Commendable as this may be it is also an indication of the DBC's attempted political neutrality. Seeing as planned economy is an economic system often associated with communist politics, the DBC would have been careful neither to offend the Danish Communist Party (DKP) nor risk expressing political bias by supporting what could have been perceived as a communist policy. Finally, as was made clear in chapter 5.4., the reception of THF often revealed a rather literal interpretation of the comedic and metaphorical licenses Locher took. Therefore, understanding how direct re-proportioning works in *Planned Economy* allows us to see one of the ways in which THF offered educational aspects in a comedic form - as well as indicate how it could have been interpreted at the time.

6.2.2. Commissions

As was pointed out in the re-proportioning chapter, the seven categories are not mutually exclusive. In fact it is quite rare to see only one of them represented in a single THF-episode. *Pulterkammerrydning* (Attic Clearing⁴⁹⁴) is no exception, even though I have included it in this chapter as a classic example of the "commissions" category. As noted in chapter 6.1., commissions as a term refers to episodes, which seem to have been written as part of a commission to Locher from different governing bodies that needed the public's attention on a certain subject. The main theme of "attic clearing" in the above mentioned episode refers to a real campaign launched on 1 February and carried out by "Københavns Luftværnsforening" (the Air Force Union of Copenhagen). The aim was to reduce the amount of flammable objects stored in private attics across

⁴⁹⁴ The title is not original, but I have named it after its main theme for the sake of clarity: *Pulterkammerrydning* (Attic Clearing). Date according to the manuscript: 05.02.1939.

the city centre in case of bombing. Given the timing of the broadcast and the rather clumsily incorporated information about the event it is very likely that the episode was commissioned by the Air Force. Interestingly, while the two first pages of the manuscript contain direct information about the event, the rest of it humorously reflects on the emotional consequences for the single citizen. In that sense, Locher seems to have enjoyed full freedom in his treatment of the subject and in this case even to have had room for a slightly critical take on it.

Summary of *Attic Clearing*

According to the stage director's manuscript, the very first sound heard is the faint music of a car with large loudspeakers on the roof followed by Å & G's comments. The first page and a half read as a slightly awkward dialogue the aim of which is mainly to inform the listener about the phenomenon of "attic clearing". Å takes on the inquisitive role while G readily answers his questions in a matter of fact way. What is this noise? Why do we have to participate? Who is behind it all? Etc. Then they move on to discussing the so-called rubbish the M-i-l keeps in their attic, and then she barges into their apartment.

The M-i-l is very agitated and demands a glass of cognac while G tries to calm her down. Finally she explains that the authorities are encroaching on her private property and that she is ready to take on the fight. She then collapses with exhaustion into a chair because she realises that her daughter and son-in-law are also part of the problem or "the new times" as she calls it. She explains that the times do not appreciate the sentimental value of broken objects which she herself values because she is the one who broke them and there is a memory attached to every dent and crack. She is afraid that losing the objects might mean losing the memories too and has barricaded her belongings in their attic, where she is awaiting the great battle with "the times". Then the sound of the loudspeaker car returns, closer than before. She starts ranting about how she is a taxpaying citizen who in principle pays the wages of every public servant and public utility and therefore should be able to decide what happens to her own belongings. The car sound becomes even louder and the actual words from the speakers are audible: "Hello, Hello! This is the Attic Clearing! We are here to help you remove all

old and superfluous things from your attics. Just be ready for our arrival!"⁴⁹⁵ The M-i-l explains that she has safeguarded her property by buying an insurance that she will claim as soon as her belongings have been removed. Her son-in-law explains that she will not be able to follow through with this clever plan. She continues to complain about the times in general and how they have her installed in a modern apartment where she is carried up and down in a thin elevator string, in fear for her life.⁴⁹⁶ The walls are too thin to have privacy and radios and gramophone players are polluting the air etc. She bemoans the new traffic rules regulating her movements in the city and the young people on the trams, who no longer offer her their seat. She is frustrated that the older generation does not have a say in the major decisions and the constant discussions of the looming war make her nervous. The car returns and the loudspeakers announce that there is no way out. The M-i-l stands up straight and says: "Yes, yes, yes! Go ahead! All of the old stuff must go, it serves no purpose, it only takes up space! I am old too so you might as well take me while you're at it!"⁴⁹⁷ The episode ends with the roar of the loudspeaker car. The modern times have the final say.

The Sounds of *Attic Clearing*

As in many other THF-episodes, the main dramatic "action" takes place on the level of the dialogue (as opposed to physical action) but in this particular case, the manuscript also indicates an important development on the sonic level. According to the stage notes, the "soundscape" of the episode is dominated by the two main dramatic forces; the M-i-l and the rhythmic returns of the loudspeaker car. Looking more closely at how they have been distributed throughout reveals an interesting pattern and one that supports the content. The loudspeaker car frames the narrative by being the first and the last sound heard and in between it returns with an ever increasing intensity. This steady increase every time the sound of the loudspeaker car is reintroduced also shows the relentless nature of the institutional initiatives it represents. No matter how

⁴⁹⁵ Op.cit. *Pulterkammerrydning*, p. 12. Original version: "Hallo, Hallo! Her er Pulterkammerrydningen! Vi er kommen for at hjælpe Dem med at faa alle Deres gamle og overflødige Ting væk fra Pulterkamrene. Hold Dem bare rede til vi kommer!"

⁴⁹⁶ A similar inability to interact with modern living environments was visible in the few episodes from 1934, where Å & G had recently moved into a functionalist building (chapter 5.3.).

⁴⁹⁷ Op.cit. *Pulterkammerrydning*, p. 17. Original version: "Ja, ja, ja! Kom I bare! Alt det gamle skal væk, det er ingen Nytte til og fylder bare op! Jeg er ogsaa gammel, saa mig kan I tage ved samme Lejlighed!"

vehemently the M-i-l objects to its intrusion upon her privacy, the loudspeaker car keeps closing in on the THF-home. On the other hand, the M-i-l's state (and voice) is described as "agitated and short of breath" (p. 5), "desperate" (p. 7), "exhausted" (p. 7), "almost crying" (p. 8), "sad" (p. 13),⁴⁹⁸ and marked by great "indignation, sorrow and pathos" (p. 17). These emotional fluctuations clearly betray the erratic reactions of an individual when faced with such a rationally based governmental initiative. The point of intersection between the two sounds (the loudspeaker car and the M-i-l's voice) and thereby also the dramatic climax, is placed on page 17. Here, the voice from the loudspeaker car becomes audible as mentioned above, and the M-i-l takes the final step and declares herself garbage together with her belongings.

Why were they clearing attics in 1939?

As mentioned above, this episode is about the public initiative called "Attic Clearing" to help the citizens of Copenhagen clear their attic space with the assistance of a cleaning squad driving through the streets. As mentioned earlier, it was launched on 1 February 1939 when war was looming in Europe and the fear of bomb raids on Copenhagen prompted new initiatives to avoid extensive fires in apartment buildings.⁴⁹⁹ As early as 1936 there was an article on the cover of the newspaper *Politiken*⁵⁰⁰ discussing the subject from a rather unusual angle. It focused on the small test bombings performed on apartment buildings in the busy residential area Christianshavn in Copenhagen. Executed on a house set for demolition, it was meant to test the fire hazard of storing objects in the attic. The whole experiment was documented on film for a public campaign by the Air Force. It showed without a doubt that the fire hazard was much larger in the cases where furniture had been left as opposed to empty attics where sand had been spread across the floorboards. Although the article did not exactly downplay the danger involved, there was an element of irony in the coverage of the event. On the

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid. Original versions: "forpustet og ophidset", "desperat", "udmattet", "næsten grædende", "trist", "Harme, Sorg, og Pathos".

⁴⁹⁹ To give an impression of the regular news, the other headlines in *Politiken* between 4-8 Feb 1939 refer to: the Nordic meeting in KB Hallen to support democracy in the Nordic countries, "Six Days' Bicycle Race" in Forum, a visit from the international jazz conductor Henry Hall, the Spanish Civil War: fundraising for the Spanish children, and the endless streams of Catalanian soldiers and civilians trotting towards safety in France.

⁵⁰⁰ "Hjemlige Brandbomber futter i Torvegades Pulterkamre" in: *Politiken*, 16.11.1936.

one hand the article featured photographs of the bombs used with reference to the standards of current warfare, thus making the danger seem very present. The article was even printed on the same page as story on the Spanish dictator Franco's bombing of women and children. On the other hand the futility of the experiment could not help but become obvious towards the end of the article. It was pointed out that the experiments did not indicate anything about what would happen if the bombs were dropped from an altitude of several thousand metres. In the experiment the bombs had been placed on the floor. However, the irony is mainly obvious in the opening paragraph:

If you want to be a modern man, you must exterminate the collector's mania that makes you store an old, worn-out woven chair in the attic. On the other hand you would be very much in line with the latest development if you scattered sand on the floor in said attic. Later it may also prove necessary to make sandboxes of your rooms. However, the latter is yet in the lap of a cosy future.⁵⁰¹

On the day when the campaign was finally launched in 1939, *Politiken* ran another article, which described the process in a jolly tone.⁵⁰² Not once were the words "fire hazard" or "bomb threat" mentioned, which seems like an odd omission today. It did however refer to a radio speech⁵⁰³ by the Minister of the Interior Dahlgaard held a few days previously, where he had encouraged public participation in the initiative. He might have mentioned the motives behind the initiative in that connection, but it is also possible that the government did not wish or even need to cause any more alarm among the public and so were careful with any further references. This phenomenon is clearly reflected in THF, when the M-i-l reveals that it is exactly that kind of war talk that sparked her nervous condition in the first place (p. 16). So it may be that the heart of the matter is not so much the infringement of her privacy or the onslaught of modern times but the fear of war, which is equated with rationalization and modernity. When she finally arrives at the theme of war during her long and silly rant about the many new things that confuse and annoy her, Å's ironic attitude subsides and he meets her half

⁵⁰¹ Op.cit.: "Hvis man vil være et moderne Menneske maa man udrydde den Samlermani, som faar en til at anbringe en gammel udtjent Kurvestol på Loftskammeret. Til Gengæld er man i Kontakt med Udviklingen, naar man slaar Sand paa Gulvet i samme Loftskammer. Senere vil det maaske vise sig, at man ogsaa bør gøre sine Værelser til Sandkasser. Det sidste er dog noget, der endnu hviler i en hyggelig Fremtids Skød."

⁵⁰² "Musik i Gaden medens Pulterkamrene ryddes!" in: *Politiken*, 01.02.1939.

⁵⁰³ Sadly this recording is not available at the DBC.

way: "I'll admit, Mother-in-law, that we are living in rather crazy times."⁵⁰⁴ Returning to the article in *Politiken*, they point out there that the attic clearing may be voluntary at this point but any refusal to participate will probably result in the use of force to follow it through. It is that serious after all.

While the clearing of attics seems like a perfectly reasonable safety measure, the THF-episode also shows how such a governmental intervention might be experienced as a violation on private property. In the episode Å & G are only involved indirectly in the event as it is the M-i-l who keeps boxes of her memorabilia in their attic. Their own memories are not at stake. This results in a generational twist to the story when the M-i-l likens the attic clearing initiative to the modern times and the younger generation. The change of perspective relates to the above quotation from *Politiken*, which also described the initiative as a sign of modern times. On a larger scale it was part of the general rationalisation movement mirrored in functionalist furniture and architecture as well as in the ongoing attention to health, hygiene and improvement of social living conditions throughout the 1930s. All of these matters, which were also highlighted in the historical chapters of 4.1. and 4.2., were key elements of the emerging welfare state.

Although the M-i-l is ridiculed through her misunderstanding of new phenomena and the manner in which she tries to capitalise on her loss through her insurance scam, her despair is real. The usually manipulative and self-centered character is a genuine victim of the times. By making her so, THF reflects conservative values as well as benefits from the contradictory tendency of clinging to the past. It emphasises the values, which are being replaced by new ones and how that affects the older generation, which feels out of the loop. Another interesting parallel between the *Politiken*-article and *Attic Clearing* is the equation of storing old belongings with hoarding trash. As was seen in chapter 6.2.1. there is an alarming incongruence between the rationally minded state and the complex individual with sentimental motives. On a national level it is easy to agree with the necessity of public safety measures but it comes at a price for the individual citizen. Written in 1939⁵⁰⁵ it is hard not to see it as a slight critique of the downsides of the then

⁵⁰⁴ *Attic Clearing*: 02.05.1939, p. 16: "Jeg indrømmer, Svigermor, at det er en lidt tosset Tid, vi lever i."

⁵⁰⁵ Judging by the date on the script at hand, although it is possible that the content was recycled from an earlier broadcast.

budding welfare state in Denmark. With welfare also come rationalisation, standardisation and a larger degree of state interference in the private sphere.

Conclusion

As mentioned in chapter 6.1., the commissions category is not only a matter of who (or which government body) initiated the subject of the episode. The *nature* of the commission, which is dependent on a scheduled event in the immediate future, allowed Locher a different degree of topicality in his manuscripts. Therefore, the category reveals how Locher could improve the basis for identification with THF by addressing public issues such as attic clearing almost simultaneously with the real event. However, since the initiative mentioned in this episode seems to have been limited to Copenhagen, it also gave the DBC the opportunity to inform other parts of Denmark of the pre-war preparations being made in the capital. This episode shows how the process of re-proportioning is not simply a matter of rescaling larger events to domestic proportions. Indeed it acknowledges the ontological difference between the different perspectives. By transferring the governmental initiative to the single household, it shows where the transfer fails. Å & G, who are not really affected by the initiative, can acknowledge the necessity of clearing attics and accept it willingly. When specific objects belonging to specific people are at risk it excites an emotional response - even one that extends beyond the particular case of an old painting bound for the rubbish heap. Suddenly it is about the threat of war and a refusal to let go of the old World as is the case with the M-i-l. She is a representative of an era of scarcity, when discarding something even half usable was unthinkable, while Å & G (G in particular) are influenced by the new rational mindset of the state that privileges safety and hygiene over thrift.

Even with all this critical potential, the fundamental attitude of *Attic Clearing* is not to stand in the way of progress. For all its conservative backbone, it is content with offering a space for contemplation of the consequences. In that sense, it delivers on commission, but adds individual perspective to the story.

6.2.3. Holidays and seasons

Creating a weekly series such as THF that is broadcast for 20 consecutive years makes repetition inevitable in one form or the other. Not only does the everyday living pattern of THF become predictable in time but even the more rare occasions such as birthdays and holidays end up returning on the airwaves year after year. Far from being a negative factor, this very repetition had the potential to connect THF to the real Hansens and Jensens of Denmark. Moreover, the near-simultaneity of the fictitious and real timelines delivered a constant flow of natural content to the episodes and ensured a renewed relevance of the series every week. The listeners could become familiar with the fictional characters and the fact that they shared the same time, eventful or mundane, only added to their identification. As I mentioned briefly in chapter 6.1. Scannell (1996) very aptly pointed out that this orientation towards the listeners' experienced time ("phenomenological time") is fundamental to broadcasting's mode of address, something which is most clearly expressed in the serial formats which are open-ended - just like everyday life.⁵⁰⁶ These structures are also woven into THF and are reflected in the story lines and dialogues of episodes in the "holidays and seasons category". The importance of the younger generation in carrying forth (holiday) traditions is the central theme in the two episodes, I have chosen to analyse here: *Tvillingernes Fødselsdag* (The Twins' Birthday)⁵⁰⁷ from 1943 and *Det usynlige Juletræ* (The Invisible Christmas Tree)⁵⁰⁸ from 1944. The dating of these episodes is hardly a coincidence. When the first of the episodes was written, Denmark had been under German occupation for three years. By the time of the second episode, the Danish government had resigned and the country was entirely under German control. Living under the constant threat of bombs and increasingly isolated from the outside world, these THF episodes reflected a yearning for the kind of stability that familiar rituals could bring.⁵⁰⁹ This is even more the case with the comfort of knowing that the future of those traditions was secured by the participation of the younger generation. The ritual serves as a way of maintaining order in the face of chaos. By performing a

⁵⁰⁶ Op.cit. Scannell (1996), p. 156.

⁵⁰⁷ *Tvillingernes Fødselsdag*, 23.05.1943.

⁵⁰⁸ *Det usynlige juletræ* (The Invisible Christmas Tree), 26.12.1944.

⁵⁰⁹ At the same time the occupational forces would probably have encouraged any storyline that could have a somewhat calming effect on the Danish public.

predetermined set of actions (rituals) according to a certain set of rules (tradition), a person may remain in control - when not of the circumstances, then at least of the actions themselves and part of the family's and the nation's history. Both of the episodes deal with the traditions connected to certain festivities (birthday and Christmas) implicitly as well as explicitly. The process of re-proportioning unfolds on three levels here:

The first level is that of tradition and refers to history as a way of legitimising itself ("that's what we did last year"). The second is the level of topicality and refers to the specific time in which the episode was written ("this is how we do it under the current circumstances"). The third and final is a meta-level, where the characters reflect on and negotiate their own traditions, and by extension those of the Danish people in general ("this element is a central part of this ritual"). As to the different "temporal relationships", *The Twins' Birthday* and *The Invisible Christmas Tree* refer to an annual celebration governed by the rules of tradition as well as to the current state of affairs in Denmark at the time of their creation. *The Twins' Birthday* is a depiction of birthday rituals, and hence does not necessarily coincide with the exact time of the listener (it may be Sunday in both worlds but the birthday only takes place in fiction). It relates to its listeners by attempting to reflect their own birthday memories in a THF setting as well as connecting them to the experiences of living in wartime where even festivities are marked by austerity. *The Invisible Christmas Tree* addresses the annual Christmas rituals as well as the particular conditions surrounding the Christmas of 1944, but it had the added topicality of potentially being broadcast during the actual holidays.⁵¹⁰

The question is whether their treatment of traditions is merely *descriptive*, or if it becomes *normative* along the way? In other words, are the episodes meant to simply reflect Danish traditions as Locher observed them, or are they idealising a particular tradition for their listeners to follow? Before examining this in further detail, I will provide a summary of the two episodes.

⁵¹⁰ The manuscript for *The Twins' Birthday* from SDBC had a note on it saying "Not usable" ("Kan ikke anvendes"). Whether it was for censorship reasons or for the fact that it was considerably longer than most of the other manuscripts is difficult to say. Regardless of that, the narrative content remains the same and for the purpose of this analysis the actual broadcast date or lack thereof is not of any consequence, if we do not know the reason it was rejected.

Summary of *The Twins' Birthday*

On the birthday of the twins Little G (LG) and Little Å (LÅ), the M-i-l arrives at the Hansen residence. She immediately notices Å's absence of and wonders how this can be possible on such an important day. She talks about the things she hopes they will be enjoying at the birthday, knowing that chances are slim at best. They are also expecting G's sister Ellen and her husband Ebbe, but the M-i-l informs G that they will probably not come since they are fighting as usual. They have their own strategies against each other and their battle never ends. The M-i-l remarks that all men are unreliable, and G defends Å saying he is just working late and that he will arrive shortly. Å calls to tell G that he will not be able to make it. The M-i-l insinuates that he is out drinking and G keeps defending him. Then Ellen arrives without her husband, who apparently also had something very important to do. She claims that, in *her* experience, children are only interested in their father insofar as he is interested in them so the twins will not be missing Å. G calls out the window to the twins and announces that there will be cake. She is sorry that it is rather small this year. The M-i-l hopes in vain that there will also be "five-cent-cakes" - even if the price has gone up to 20 cents, but no. Only sponge cake with marmelade, lemon and sugar. The twins return to the apartment with great glee and when Ellen says "happy birthday" the M-i-l says that she had forgotten all about it. The twins tell her that she says the same thing each year and that it has become part of the ritual. When opening their presents they keep insisting that it all happen exactly the way it usually does. The M-i-l must pretend to have forgotten their presents and G must remind them to thank her, even though they would have done so anyway. That is how they have always done it, down to the specific wording of their replies to one another because "Nothing can ever change!" as LG puts it. It seems as if the twins have not noticed Å's absence, but when they are made aware of it they turn sad and decide to leave him some cake. It just is not the same without him. They run outside to play again and leave G to have the final word against Ellen. The children did miss him after all, and by Ellen's reasoning, then Å must miss them too.

Summary of *The Invisible Christmas Tree*

It is Christmas Eve and Å returns home, exhausted and unhappy because he was unable to find a Christmas tree. G is upset and Å close to tears because he was so intent on making Christmas exactly the way it was when he was a child, even if they have to do without the traditional roast goose. Nothing is the way it is supposed to be; the M-i-l was unable to come and they cannot afford the proper ingredients for the festive meal. What will the children say? Meanwhile the twins are waiting in a separate room hoping to be allowed to see the decorated Christmas tree soon. They peek through the keyhole and notice that there is no tree and immediately feel sorry for their father for whom Christmas has always been so important. LG is also sad but LÅ decides that something must be done. When the parents arrive to break the sad news to them they pretend as if there *is* a Christmas tree, they enjoy the invisible roast goose and have conversations in the voice of the M-i-l. Eventually Å & G catch on to their game and they end up having a lovely time. Å concludes with a little speech where he shares his pride in his two children and their ability to keep Christmas as lovely as always with courage and imagination. "Merry Christmas you two! I have realised that no one can take Christmas away from you!"⁵¹¹

"It's not really a birthday, if there isn't any birthday chocolate..."

In what sense do these two episodes re-proportion current events or phenomena of their time? What is it they are rescaling into domestic proportions and thereby addressing the audience in the reality of their own lives? The answers to these questions reveal that even though the subject treatment may not be particularly subtle, the relationship between repetition and variation and the interplay of different temporal levels are quite complex.

On the surface *The Twins' Birthday* is about just that, the celebration of the twins' birthday. However, the majority of the dialogue is concerned with themes that are more peripheral to the title. On the opening page the M-i-l arrives and already in her second

⁵¹¹ Op.cit. *Det usynlige Juletræ*, (1944), p. 18. Original version: "Glædelig Jul I to! Jer er der ingen der kan tage Julen fra, det er jeg bleven klar over..!"

line, she points out that Å is absent. In the following pages this is a recurring theme that is also picked up when Ellen arrives without her husband. Where are all the men and why is this subject so important?⁵¹² Seen in relation to the birthday, the absence of the men is noticeable, since they are central components in the annual celebration. They must be there simply because they always have been there - well Å must, while uncle Ebbe seems to be more dispensable in the eyes of the children. A similar insistence on ritual is visible in the M-i-l's exchange with G:

M-i-l: I don't suppose we are having hot chocolate?

G: Where on earth would I get that from?

M-i-l: Well, no.. but one can hope. It's as if it's not really a birthday, if there isn't any birthday chocolate...

G: As long as the children get their presents, they are happy.

M-i-l: Yes...the children are..

G: So you think that the people bringing the gifts feel a little cheated, when they don't receive anything proper in return?

M-i-l: Naturally I wouldn't say that, but there really was something special about birthday chocolate with whipped cream.

G: Yes, it was too fatty!

M-i-l: Exactly. One always felt a little sick afterwards..

G: Did you really like that?

M-i-l: One felt sick with a good conscience. After all it was only for the sake of the birthday child that one had four whole cups - and it was really lovely seeing the chocolate pitcher again!

G: Yes, it was...

M-i-l: It is almost always an inherited pitcher.. Like your blue one with the lion on the handle and all of that gold... And you only see it that one time a year...⁵¹³

⁵¹² Though there are no direct indications of this, the absence of the men may also have been a "nudge". At this period in Danish history, May 1943, there were increased tensions between the Danish public and the occupational forces and several resistance groups had started forming. Therefore it is not impossible that the absent men are a reference to the men who were active in the resistance and therefore sometimes disappeared without any clear explanation.

⁵¹³ Op.cit. *Det usynlige juletræ* (1944), pp. 3-4. Original version: "Vi skal vel ikke have Chokolade? / Hvor skulde jeg dog faa den fra? / Nej, næe.. men man haaber jo alligevel. Det er ligesom det ikke er rigtig Fødselsdag, naar man ikke har faaet Fødselsdagschokolade.../ Bare Børnene faar Gaver, saa er de saamænd glade. / Jae.. Børnene.. / Men du mener maaske, at de, der kommer med Gaverne, føler sig lidt snydt, naar de ikke faar noget rigtigt for dem? / Det vil jeg naturligvis ikke sige, men der var nu en egen Stemning over Fødselsdagschokolade med Flødeskum i.. / Ja, den var for fed! / Netop. Man blev altid lidt daarlig efter den.. / Synes du egentlig, det var rart? / Man havde Kvalme med god Samvittighed. Det var jo for Fødselsdagsbarnets Skyld, at man drak hele fire Kopper — og saa var det ogsaa saa hyggeligt at se

The shift in the dialogue towards the end is important. The first long exchange is an exhibition of the M-i-l's childish selfishness as well as a display of the silliness of insisting on a ritual that even the body wants to reject⁵¹⁴ (= the nausea connected to the overconsumption of hot chocolate). Then the M-i-l changes her focus to the pitcher, and she immediately succeeds in winning G's approval, when she acknowledges the image with her dreamy reply: "Yes, it was...", the listeners are invited to join in on her reverie. In her final line, the M-i-l focuses completely away from the fictional world and on that of the listeners. By stating "It is almost always an inherited pitcher" she is saying something that would be obvious to her daughter and it is thus superfluous, unless it has a wider application. In a single line she connects what is very possibly a common practice in many Danish homes (the inherited pitcher) with their own family heirloom (the blue one with the lion on the handle etc). This is how individual and general traditions are constantly linked throughout THF, especially in the episodes belonging to the holidays and seasons category. In rhetorical details like these, individual choices are elevated to general truths. What is normal in THF is also normal on a national level. That is the essence of what I have described earlier as *the normative strategy* in family serials.

Again, the re-proportioning at work in the hot chocolate example is very similar to Billig's (2010) concept of "banal nationalism", referring to the everyday, banal reaffirmations of the nation, thriving in Western language, practice, and in common imagery without us even noticing it. This is what naturalises the public's idea of the nation to the point where it is beyond question. Just as THF seems to equate the statement "this is what we do in our family" with "this is what everyone does in Denmark". The link to the national level may not be explicit but it is understood, as the example with the cleaning lady indicated in chapter 5.4. THF was a series broadcast on Danish radio, in Danish language, and it was meant to reflect the life of an average Danish family. It is clear from the manuscripts that the characters were moulded on archetypes rather than on realistic psychological individuals, and as we have seen in

Chocoladekanden igen! / Ja, det var det.. / Det er jo næsten altid en gammelarvet Kande..ligesom din den blaa med Løven paa Hanken og det meget Guld...og man ser den jo kun den ene Gang om Aaret..."

⁵¹⁴ The same notion is mentioned in the episode *Untitled episode* from 23.12.1934, where Å says: "One must have a little stomach ache on the day after Christmas." / "Man skal være lidt Mavedaarlig Første-Juledag." P. 9.

previous chapters, it was also echoed in the reception. This is where the distinction between the descriptive and the normative is blurred. Perhaps making the distinction is not even significant in itself; it is certainly impossible to prove anything for certain. The key is to point out that the lines are blurry, and that the way THF is set up as a collection of archetypes makes it an ideal vehicle for ideological content.

The above quotation was an example of how the M-i-l manages to persuade her daughter that hot chocolate belongs in the birthday ritual. To put it in Aristotelian terms, she uses *logos* when referring to precedence (the fact that they have done it before), but it does not work. It is not until she uses *pathos* by identifying what she personally considers the sine qua non of a real birthday celebration (the inherited pitcher to which so many memories are attached). In the twins' case, the procedure is quite different. Not only do they invoke rituals of the past, but they also have the power to instate new ones. *The Twins' Birthday* is a shining example of how this can be done, when the twins insist that the adults perform the exact same actions as on their previous birthdays. First of all, the twins are the ones who identify the pattern that the adults are following unbeknown to themselves. The first step of identifying the pattern is when the M-i-l asks the twins how they could know that she was only pretending to have forgotten about their birthday and LÅ answers: "Because you say that every year!" (p. 13) The second step is when LG establishes it as a matter of importance: "No, grandmother, you must keep on doing that, because now it belongs there." (p. 13) The third step is the addition of rules: LG: "No grandmother, that's wrong!// Because you are not saying it like you usually do!" (p. 15) The fourth step is rehearsing the details with the uninitiated (the M-i-l): LG: "You forgot to say "apparently"" (p. 16). The final step is repeating the incantation "Nothing is allowed to change." (p. 16). That is how the twins manage to introduce a new ritual, but it only works because the adults humour them. They willingly go along with the dictations of the children, partly because it is their birthday, and probably also partly for the comfort of an unchangeable ritual in a period that was anything but stable. The twins' pattern of insistence seems inherited from Å, who already displayed his strict conservatism in the Christmas episode from 1934: "... as concerns Christmas, I am not only sentimental, but also strictly orthodox.

Christmas must always be the same!"⁵¹⁵ When the twins finally realise that their father is not there to celebrate with them (p. 23), the illusion of a perfectly identical birthday celebration collapses and they give up their endeavour altogether.

This meticulous attention to repeating every step of the birthday ritual also has a much wider societal application. It is one among numerous examples of how THF could boost public morale, and it can be seen as an explanation of the fact that THF continued to be broadcast every week without interruption during WWII. On the other hand, it ironically points out the arbitrary nature of tradition. What began as an unconscious repetition of sentences and jokes by the adults is elevated to law once the twins have identified it as a ritual.

In *The Invisible Christmas Tree* many of the same elements reappear, though in different incarnations. Here it is Å who wants to repeat the Christmases of his childhood for his and his family's sake, while the twins reinvent the way Christmas is celebrated. The episode can be divided into four main sections, which follow the ritual from crisis to completion. In the first section (pp. 3-5), G and Å discuss what to do now that Å has been unable to find a Christmas tree. They identify three further elements that will be missing from their Christmas this year: the M-i-l, the roast goose, and the rice pudding. They decide to break the news gently to the children and then the narrative shifts to the twins' point of view. In the second section (pp. 5-8) the twins are in their room waiting to see the decorated Christmas tree, when they realise there will be none. LÅ decides that they must help their father, whom he knows to be a big fan of Christmas. In the third section (pp. 8-17) the twins' unravel their plan to retrieve the four elements that were identified as missing in part one.⁵¹⁶ In the fourth and final section (pp.17-18) the adults resume responsibility for the ritual, in Å's speech. In it, Å philosophises over the importance of the children's plan and thanks them for restoring Christmas.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid. p. 8. Original version: "... og hvad Julen angaar, er jeg ikke blot sentimental, men ogsaa streng ortodoks. Julen skal altid være ens."

⁵¹⁶ This idea of imagining a better Christmas seems inspired by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen's tale *Den lille Pige med Svovlstikkerne* (The Little Match Girl, 1845) in which a poor child strikes matches to keep warm and in the flame sees images of a grand feast with roast goose and fine porcelain. While the pauper ends up freezing to death in Andersen's story, the "poverty" of the Hansen family seems manageable in comparison, as long as they maintain the "right" attitude.

Conclusion

What has been negotiated in these four sections of *The Invisible Christmas Tree* is the difference between the ideal Christmas (one where all of the elements are in place) and the actual Christmas (one of scarcity). The solution is an imagined Christmas that borrows elements from both. Nourished by the memory of Christmases past and the knowledge of a current reality, it almost turns into a hyper-Christmas.⁵¹⁷ At the same time, *The Invisible Christmas Tree* as well as *The Twins' Birthday* highlight the social nature of rituals by showing how much of it is about people's expectations of the expectations of others. While particular rituals may be instigated by individuals, the larger entity of tradition is embedded in and maintained through social interaction and constant negotiation of the norm. Thus using the holidays and seasons category allows us to understand how the concepts of "normalcy" and, more indirectly, "Danishness", are defined in THF by way of rituals and tradition, and the interlacing of repetition and predictability. Thereby this category best displays Scannell's term "dailiness" and how it is inherent in THF, by in a sense taking the temporal arrangement of broadcasting to the thematic level and making its ritualisation a topic of conversation.

6.2.4. Trends

A commonly used technique for creating narrative variation in THF is the introduction of recent "trends" in fashion, dieting, body image, health, etc. This has the advantage of turning the conventional upside down, of immediately creating a dramatic conflict, and of being a passing fad in the world as well as in the THF universe. Not only does the novelty of a trend tend to invite comedic commentary, it also allows Locher to introduce a disturbing phenomenon with a limited lifespan. That way the THF universe is left unscathed and ready for the introduction of new shenanigans in the following week's episode. On a fictional level, the adoption of a new trend inside the THF household is a welcome relief from the humdrum of everyday life.

⁵¹⁷ In the abovementioned Christmas episode from 1934, Å mourns the loss of his own Christmas but realises that together with G he can create a new ritual for his children to enjoy.

The trends category of re-proportioning is defined by its medium degree of topicality and humorous treatment of the subject. It deals with recent and easily identifiable trends in society and the way it is used for comedic effect is quite similar to how ritual and tradition were described in the previous analysis. Rituals connected to holidays and seasons, as well as trends at a certain point in time both have a way of making people follow them blindly without questioning the legitimacy or sanity of the procedures involved. At Christmas time one is meant to overeat to the point of nausea⁵¹⁸ and if one decides to start a raw food diet⁵¹⁹ there can be no exceptions. It is exactly this kind of uncompromising and mindless obedience that Locker often chooses to target. To exemplify this category I have chosen to focus on the episode *Kuldemetoden* (The Chilling Method⁵²⁰) from 1934. This time G is campaigning for a new health scheme involving fresh air:

Summary of *The Chilling Method*

G has just read an article on improving children's health by exposing them to fresh air from open windows: The Chilling Method. Å reminds her of the time when she insisted on eating only raw food.⁵²¹ He calls her fixed ideas a kind of modern religion and she admits that she likes to try out "the new movements". G wishes that he would also get excited about new things or just things in general. He only loves steaks. Å mentions the so called "vikings" who bathe through a hole in the ice and she urges him to challenge her: He opens even more windows, and right before G's gymnastics teacher Miss Hoppe (= Miss Jump) arrives, Å starts undressing so he can make the most of the cold air. A perfect combination of the chilling method and another trend: nudism. G worries about her guest arriving only to find her husband naked, so she finally admits defeat and offers to forget about the chilling method in exchange for him putting his clothes back on. Å makes her promise that she will never resume the method and orders some hot tea for himself.

⁵¹⁸ *Julemad*, (Christmas Food), 1931 (no date).

⁵¹⁹ *Raakost* (Raw Food), February 1931.

⁵²⁰ *Kuldemetoden*, 15.04.1934.

⁵²¹ This is a rare example of continuity in THF, as it refers to the abovementioned episode about raw food from three years earlier (February 1931). It is very likely that the episode had been reused since then, making the reference less obscure. In it G decided to serve raw vegetables and nuts instead of meat, "which gives you a stomach ache". Naturally it did not please Å who is a self-declared meat lover.

A battle of words

On the level of re-proportioning, what is witnessed in *The Chilling Method* is a sign of the times. One may even say that the episode is a metaphor for the role that trends usually play in THF. The trend is a breath of fresh air rushing through the Hansen family home, without the power to shake up more than a few newspapers before the window is closed again. The treatment of a trend often follows four basic steps, some of which overlap: Establishment (identifying a new trend/change), examination (discussing pros and cons), exploration (actually trying it out), and finally, expulsion from the Hansen universe (returning to status quo). It is relatively easy to follow the process by observing its linguistic markers on the surface of the text.

In *The Chilling Method*, “the establishment phase” starts with Å’s first remarks about the chilly living room when he returns from work: “Now I see it... The window is open, so it’s not that strange. I will soon close it.”⁵²² The last line has an almost prophetic ring to it. The Danish version of “I will soon close it” has a second meaning along the lines of “I will soon shut it down”. His remark about “it” has a double entendre, at once referring to the actual window *and* to the trend that caused G to open it. This is the establishment phase, where a change in the everyday routine is noticed. Once that has been done, Å proceeds to criticise the temperature in the room by referring to it as “a draught”. G is heavily opposed to that and chooses to use the words “cool” and “chilly” instead. Å then settles on calling it “running air”.

This battle of words works as an opening of “the examination and exploration phases” since it is the first discussion of the trend as well as contains observations about how it feels on the body. As is often the case with trend-episodes in THF, the two phases overlap. While the chilling method is being tested, Å comments on its many impracticalities and G defends it. Å says it is uncomfortable and G replies that it is important to set their own comfort aside for the sake of the children. Å mentions examples of people who have been hurt following other kinds of healthy trends such as doing gymnastics in the home with Kaptajn Jespersen.⁵²³ The real reason for their

⁵²² Op.cit. *Kuldemetoden* (1934), p. 3. Original version: “Nu ser jeg det...Vinduet staar jo aabent, saa er det ikke saa underligt. Det skal jeg snart faa lukket!”

⁵²³ See chapter 4.2.

accidents was that they misunderstood the directions given and not that the trend was flawed. G then mentions that she wishes Å were able to show his enthusiasm for a cause other than eating steak. This provokes him to launch a counter attack, in which he suddenly decides to follow the trend and take it to such an extreme that G will no longer follow. I will return to this relationship dynamic below, but for now I will continue describing the four phases. Å takes it upon himself to take the trend to its limits in order to make a mockery of it. He opens even more windows, orders blocks of ice from the grocery store, and takes off his clothes. Linguistically this is reflected by his return to their initial battle of words: “A draught is what we had before, no this will be a wind!”⁵²⁴ That way “the chilling method” turns into a weapon against itself - no longer benefiting anyone’s health, it only serves to teach G a lesson. The completion of this exploration (his nudity) coincides with the final “expulsion phase”, in which G is compelled to dismiss the very initiative she introduced in the beginning. Again, Å marks his victory on the linguistic level: “... and when I return, I expect to find fire in the fireplace, a scalding cup of tea with a hot bun on the side and a five kroner note hidden under the plate...”⁵²⁵

A matter of extremes: The narrative purpose of the trend

This episode displays a pattern which is repeated across the different episodes and re-proportioning categories and which is pointed out in another episode about child rearing:

Å: I think you’re taking this much too lightly, a moment ago you were weeping for the children!

G: That’s true but now you’ve started taking it so seriously and tragically, and then I change course.

Å: So we must always have different views about the children?

G: Yes, we are married after all!⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ Op.cit. p. 12. Original version: “Træk, det var her, nej her bliver: Blæst!”

⁵²⁵ Op.cit. p. 18: Original version: “...og naar jeg kommer tilbage, ønsker jeg at finde Ild i Kakkelovnen, en skoldhed Kop The med en varm Hvede til, og en Femkroneseddel gemt under Tallerkenen...”.

⁵²⁶ *Findeløn* (Finder’s Fee), 28.05.1939, p. 10. Original version: “Jeg synes, du tager paa alt dette her paa en noget let Maade, før sad du og græd over Børnene! / Det er rigtigt nok, men nu er du begyndt at tage det saa uendeligt højtideligt og tragisk, og saa slaar jeg om. / Vi skal altsaa altid se modsat paa Børnene..? / Ja, vi er da gift..!”

According to their relationship dynamic, they must always meet any extreme move from the other person with a counter-move. If they cannot settle on a compromise, they must maintain each their position in order to preserve equilibrium. That is what happens when G introduces a new trend much too suddenly (and sometimes uncritically) for Å to join her. The only thing he can resort to if he wants to change her mind is to become even more extreme than her. This way he can tip the scales and push G back towards the middle. There, Å can finally meet her, triumphant in the knowledge that he has won and order has once more been restored in the Hansen home.

In one of the earliest episodes of THF⁵²⁷, the roles are reversed and Å is the one who tries to introduce a new idea: Exercise. He wakes up on a sunny Sunday morning in spring with the sudden impulse to start exercising more in order "to take part in the rejuvenation going on in nature".⁵²⁸ G is displeased with being woken up so early on her only day off and mocks Å for his new idea, pointing out that it is just an impulse and not an ardent desire on his part. If he really wanted to exercise, he might as well follow the gymnastics programme of Kaptajn Jespersen on the radio - and so she turns it on for him. Naturally Å does not do many bends and jumps before he has had enough and returns to bed, tired and defeated. The pattern seen in *The Chilling Method* is also obvious here even if the tables have been turned and the part of the extreme is played by a voice from the radio. In both cases the moral is akin to Polonius' much quoted advice in *Hamlet* "to thine own self be true", only in THF there is less patronising wisdom and more advocacy for the middle ground. This moral stretches beyond the single episodes as it is the underlying ideal of the whole series. Whether it is an expression of the Jante Law⁵²⁹, a lower middle class philosophy, or simply conservatism, being true to oneself usually means resisting any kind of development, big or small. Acting out of character is almost a mortal sin in THF, even if it entails what would otherwise be regarded as an improvement (exercising more, losing weight etc.). In *The Chilling Method*, Å expresses this preference for moderation, though with a healthy dose of understatement as he hardly ever welcomes any new things: "I don't mind that one

⁵²⁷ *Untitled episode*, (afsnit 4), 21.06.1929: about exercising with Kaptajn Jespersen. This was also mentioned in chapter 4.2.

⁵²⁸ Op.cit. *Episode no. 4*, (1929), p. 5. Original version: "at være med i den Forryngelse, der sker i Naturen."

⁵²⁹ The Jante Law was also mentioned in chapters 4.1. and 5.5.

tries something new little by little, but this spiralling method with which you always throw yourself into it..."⁵³⁰ In *Episode no. 4*, G says of Å's sudden interest in exercise: "I don't believe it! It is just a lyrical sentiment in you, stemming from the fact that you have woken up too early for once and have made the revolutionary discovery that the sun also shines this time of day..."⁵³¹. Both of these remarks have the effect of pulling the other person down to earth and closer to an average way of life. This is connected to the inherent conservatism of the serial format, which I continue to return to, particularly in series containing situational comedy (sitcoms), where the basic universe or "situation" never changes.⁵³² In his examination of the Danish television comedy, Bruun Andersen (1987)⁵³³ analyses an episode from the Danish series called *Huset på Christianshavn* (DBC, 1970-77). To that end, he uses the so-called "Störenfriedformel" (peace-disturber-formula") developed by Volker Klotz in relation to "bürgerliches Lachtheater" (bourgeois stage comedy) in 1980⁵³⁴:

A closed social group with its own regulated set of social interactions is challenged by an outsider. The mere difference of the outsider is perceived as a threat by the group and their overreaction reveals their idiomatic ways. This disproportionate reaction sheds a harsh light on the usual everyday behaviour of the group. What used to pass as natural must now reveal and justify its self-understanding anew. Thereby the vulnerability of the sensitive group is increased further.⁵³⁵

While Bruun Andersen and Klotz both describe the peace-disturber as a character, I believe that trends have a similar function in THF. Not so much a matter of a group

⁵³⁰ Op.cit. *The Chilling Method* (1934), p. 9. Original version: "Jeg har ikke noget imod, at man saa smaat prøver med et eller andet nyt, men den spiralske Metode efter hvilken du altid styrter dig ud i det..."

⁵³¹ Op.cit. *Episode no. 4* (1929), p. 7. Original version: "Jeg tror ikke paa det! Det er en lyrisk Fornemmelse hos dig, opstaaet ved, at du for en sjælden Gangs Skyld er vaagnet for tidligt og har gjort den epokegørende Opdagelse, at Solen skinner paa den Tid af Dagen..."

⁵³² Andersen, Michael B.: "Munter Sociologi. Om TV-komedien" in: *Kultur & Klasse* no. 58, 15/2. December 1987. Pp. 46-52. Reference to Bruun Andersen's definition of the "sitcom" on p. 47.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Klotz, Volker: *Bürgerliches Lachtheater, Komödie, Posse, Schwank, Operette*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München, 1980.

⁵³⁵ The same definition is quoted in Danish by Bruun Andersen (1987), p. 51. I used the German original for the English translation: Original version in Klotz (1980), p. 18: "Eine geschlossene soziale Gruppe mit eingeschliffenen Verkehrsformen wird aufgewühlt durch einen Außenseiter. Seine Andersartigkeit, als Bedrohung empfunden, reizt in Überreaktionen die Eigenartigkeit der Gruppe heraus. Unverhältnismäßig auf den Fremdkörper ansprechend, gerät auch die Verhältnismäßigkeit ihres üblichen Alltagsbetriebs in überscharfes Licht. Was bislang selbstverständlich ablief, muß unverhofft sein Selbstverständnis offenbaren und rechtfertigen. Wodurch sich die Angriffsfläche des empfindlichen Kollektivs noch vergrößert."

formation, discussions in THF usually take place within Å & G's marriage, but there is a definite challenging of a pre-existing order. The Hansen universe, which is often represented by Å, is shaken when G introduces a trend.⁵³⁶ Both "orders" (Å's and G's) are forced to defend themselves. Furthermore, as Bruun Andersen points out, the peace-disturber-formula is "connected to the internal and latent oppositions in the group"⁵³⁷ so it mainly serves to bring out a conflict that already exists. This is very much the case with Å & G, whose (op)positions are constant throughout THF, which every new discussion serves to reaffirm. Yet, there is one very fundamental difference between the "THF-formula" and the peace-disturber-formula. With a basically stable universe, most changes are perceived as a threat in THF, and the dramatic forces will be working towards regaining that stability with as few consequences for the people involved as possible. However, unlike the social comedy in Bruun Andersen where "adjustment is inevitable"⁵³⁸, (although probably much further down the line), the characters in THF do not learn or evolve from the peace-disturber.⁵³⁹ They remain the same within the narrative, which is a slightly self-contradictory trait in a series such as THF (and many others of its kind) that aims at a certain degree of topicality. For how can the world and the circumstances change without it affecting the characters' frame of mind in the least? The answer is that only in fiction can societal change be resisted thus. In real life social change happens regardless of the individual's resistance, but even so listeners might have found comfort in reflecting on the developments along with THF.

In *The Chilling Method*, the disturbance is already presented in the first line, leaving very little time to establish a sense of "normalcy": "Å: Hello, hello, here I am...brrr...it's so

⁵³⁶ Interestingly, the THF home (in G's incarnation) often proves impenetrable to the M-i-l's and Ellen's rather venomous ideas about marriage and men in general. Although they are allowed to air their ideas, G usually resists, or, at the very least moderates them considerably.

⁵³⁷ Op. cit Bruun Andersen (1987), p. 52. Original version: "[...] så har den med kollektivets latente indre modsætninger at gøre."

⁵³⁸ Ibid. p. 55. Original version: "Justerig er uundgåelig [...]"

⁵³⁹ As this is a rather generalising statement on my part, I must also point out that there are a few possible exceptions to this. One such example is the hint of an increased understanding of modern living from Å & G's first estranged encounter with their functionalist apartment in 1934 and to their more relaxed attitude towards the modern initiatives of the state as seen in *Attic Clearing* from 1939. This however is an ambiguous development, which, like so many others of its kind, is not sufficiently clear to contradict my statement in the main text.

cold in here!”⁵⁴⁰ The peace-disturber-formula also allows us to see that what is presented to the listeners is never quite the exact dullness of everyday life. In order for there to be an episode, there must be at least one story worth telling, as the legendary report from the BBC in 1930 “there is no news today⁵⁴¹”, simply is not an option in fiction. So it points to the limits of mimesis and the extent to which drama is always a matter of zooming and proportions. If one looks closely enough there is always a story to tell. If every THF storyline is based on a rupture, an intrusion, then how are we to know what the norm is? The norm is elusive, because it has little narrative value, in the sense that it can only be described through exceptions and negations.

Conclusion

The process of re-proportioning in the trend category can be summed up with the aforementioned establishment, examination, exploration, and expulsion of the trend in question. By taking a closer look at the practical complications and ramifications involved with a particular trend, by following it through to the extreme, episodes in the trend category help the listeners understand this small part of modern living better. In spite of its inevitable rejection of the trend THF manages to air common assumptions about the subject and to deliver general information about it to its listeners. Furthermore, as I indicated at above, it actually helps reconfirm normalcy as the ideal by showing the potential chaos of change though without defining normalcy as such. As a narrative strategy, it plays the important part of defining the main characters, as it is usually G who introduces trends and Å who ridicules them. The woman (in G’s incarnation) is defined as the vehicle of modernity in whom the movements of the times are reflected most clearly⁵⁴², but also in a manner, where real life fluctuations and developments depict the woman as erratic and unreflected in her embrace of newfangled ideas. At the same time the man (in Å’s incarnation) secures stability in his resistance of the new, while also standing in the way of development. So even if G is the

⁵⁴⁰ *The Chilling Method*, p. 3. Original version: “Goddag, Goddag, her har du mig ... hu, ha ... hvor er her koldt!”

⁵⁴¹ *Technological changes in the newsroom* (There is no news today, 18.04.1930). Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/newswatch/history/noflash/html/1930s.stm> (last seen 05.06.2013).

⁵⁴² I also mentioned this aspect in chapter 3.1. with reference to Björck (2010) and the similar function of female character Karin Björck in *Ingenjör Björck med family.*)

very clear loser of the two in this story line, the gloating way in which Å celebrates his victory (he orders her to make him tea and hot buns etc.) exhibits his childishness to the audience. Once more, Locher delivers an ambivalent statement for the real life Hansens to discuss at home.

6.2.5. Movements

In spite of the apparent differences between the "trends" and the "movements" categories, they are closely related. As mentioned previously, movements exist as serious undercurrents to the story lines in THF, while trends are more superficial and often given a comedic treatment. In fact trends are usually *symptoms* of movements, just like a new diet may be an expression of an increased attention to health and exercise in the 20th century. In this chapter I will analyse *Episode no. 4* from 1929⁵⁴³ as an example of the movements category. On the surface it is about Å's fear of losing his job but by using the generalising remark "in these times", Locher indicates that it is meant to depict a more collective experience of living in a certain period. I will return to this generalisation, but first it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the story:

Summary of *Episode no. 4*

It is dinnertime and G notices that Å is not eating with his usual appetite. She tries to lift his spirit but does not succeed. She then admits to him that she is not able to make ends meet in the household with the money he is currently providing her. They continue back and forth and finally Å admits that he is worried about his job. Relieved that he is confiding in her but at the same time expecting the worst from his story, she encourages him to go on. He tells her that he has had a quarrel with his superior Mr Hermansen, who criticised Å's work in front of his colleagues. As a bookkeeper Å takes great pride in the precision of his numbers and did not appreciate the ungrounded criticism. He chose to quietly point out the unfairness, as he was absolutely certain there was nothing wrong with his books. He knows that he was right in doing so, but his colleagues'

⁵⁴³ Op.cit. *Episode no. 4* (1929).

reactions and the prospect of losing his job in such hard times makes him uncomfortable. G supports him and sets their financial worries aside - she would never want him to degrade himself just to keep his job. They will manage somehow. Still, they both know the reality of it all and eventually they warm to the idea that Å should apologise. Suddenly, the doorbell rings and a messenger brings a letter from Hermansen in which he admits that he was in the wrong. They both breathe a sigh of relief, admitting that neither of them would have been able to live with themselves if Å had apologised.

“In these times...”

It may be useful to introduce the term “warrant” from Stephen Toulmin’s (1958)⁵⁴⁴ seminal work *The Uses of Argument* to elucidate the movements category. By warrant, Toulmin referred to an underlying proposition whose validity must be accepted by the speaking and the listening party in order for a spoken statement to be considered true. The movements category has a similar status in connection to Locher and his audience. In *Episode no. 4* the linguistic marker connecting the story about Å’s job situation to the movement, or “proposition”, underneath is the line by Å that I have quoted earlier: “I’m so sad and worried, *for it isn’t very easy to find a new position in these times...*”⁵⁴⁵ The phrasing indicates that the difficulty of the situation was understood and mutually accepted by Å & G, and by extension, the listeners too. THF is fraught with this kind of generalisation, as it is an easy way of placing the narrative in the then current times while appealing to a sense of collective experience. A selection of examples will show the many ways in which they are used in THF through the years (my italics below):

1931:⁵⁴⁶ (About divorce/marriage)

Å: “this *in our times* not very unusual step..”

G: “...*nowadays* one can’t be married to a man, if one doesn’t respect him.”

⁵⁴⁴ Toulmin, Stephen: *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958. P. 98.

⁵⁴⁵ Op.cit. *Episode no. 4*, (1929), p. 12. My italics. Original version: “Jeg er selv saa trist og urolig, for det er jo ikke saa nemt, at faa en ny Plads i disse Tider..”

⁵⁴⁶ *Moderne Skilsmisse* (Modern Divorce), 31.03.1931. Original version: “...dette i vore Tider ikke saa usædvanlige Skridt... / ...nu til Dags kan man ikke være gift med en Mand, naar man ikke respekterer ham.” Pp. 2 and 7.

1934:⁵⁴⁷ (About the Great Depression)

Å: "the crisis that is *presently* shaking our society to its core."

1944⁵⁴⁸: (During WWII)

G: "Oh, she was only suffering from those rabies that a few other people have also been struck by... in *unusual times*, people do unusual things."

1949⁵⁴⁹: (General reference)

Å: "I'm not drinking anything *in these times!*"

Friend: "*The times* must be washed down!"

From these few examples it is clear that "the times" usually refer to external forces or conditions that may have serious consequences for the individual, but which cannot be avoided. It is also clear that the same or very similar terms are used for rather different phenomena through the years. The only thing they have in common is the understood collectivity of the experience, no matter what the actual conditions are. For the same reason they also provide the characters with a convenient opportunity to excuse aberrant behaviour (1944, above) or to lend authority to a statement (1931, above). Still, neither of these functions would be available, if the "warrant" were not accepted by both the speaking and the listening party. Returning to Å's line from *Episode no. 4*, it means that Locher's audience must agree that there is something particularly challenging about living in Denmark in 1929 in order for "in these times" to have authority. Somewhat contradictorily, it also applies to the other years, I have quoted from above.

This is an example of the connections frequently made between individual and collective experience in THF as a way of involving the audience by playing on the familiarity of shared experience. In that sense it is very similar to the hot chocolate

⁵⁴⁷ *Nytaarsregningen* (The New Year's Bill), 1934 (date unknown). Original version: "...den Krise, som for Tiden ryster hele vort Samfund i sin Grundvold." P. 19.

⁵⁴⁸ *Æskesystemet* (The Box System), 29.10.1944. Original version: "Aah, hun led bare lidt af en Rabies, som en Del andre Mennesker ogsaa er bleven grebet af...i unormale Tider gør Folk unormale Ting". Pp. 9-10.

⁵⁴⁹ *Det er en Kone* (Now That's a Wife!), 05.09.1949. Original version: "Jeg drikker ikke noget i disse Tider! / Tiderne maa skylles ned!" P. 9.

incident in *The Twins' Birthday*, which I covered in a previous chapter (6.2.3.). Only, in this case, the actual point of reference of the words “in these times” is not crucial. Furthermore, when faced with the threat of unemployment, many people will agree that times are indeed bad. One could repeat the same line in a play today,⁵⁵⁰ and even in another country, and it might ring just as true because of the familiarity of the statement - the threat would be tangible even if the cause of it had changed. As audiences, we are often willing to agree that we are living in times where one or another force poses a threat as long as that makes us part of something larger than ourselves, in Anderson's term an imagined community. This something “larger than ourselves” is similar to what Anderson (2003)⁵⁵¹ referred to with his oft referenced concept “imagined community”, an entity or belief powerful enough to bind complete strangers together by instilling in them a sense of community based on an imagined kinship. By using expressions such as “in these times”, “nowadays”, “today”, etc Locher takes for granted that there is such a thing as a commonly shared experience of “nowadays” and at the same time he is creating it. That is also what lies in the description of THF as a “reflection” that I discussed in chapter 5.5. The reflection is really an illusion since what is being reflected does not exist save for in the reflection itself. Instead, the reflection is a construction at once depicting and inventing an image of the average young, Danish family. The fact that THF can never depict the average Danish family without simultaneously inventing it, reveals the extent to which the normative strategy, which I referred to in chapter 2.2.4., is embedded in the whole THF-enterprise.

In the following paragraph I will analyse the use of the movement category as a way of re-proportioning a general experience of living at a certain point in time. However, since “in these times” is in itself an empty or unspecific reference, I will trace what I have chosen to call “the dynamics of worrying” in *Episode no. 4*.

The dynamics of worrying

⁵⁵⁰ Locher reused the story on two subsequent occasions, only one of which is dated on the cover of the manuscript: “Ugens Enakter” (The Weekly One-act-Piece, probably a drama text in a magazine) and “Ved Sengetid” (At bedtime, 1946, possibly a text or comic strip). I have not been able to figure out exactly where they appeared. Regardless, the mere fact that the story was reused means that the basic experience underlying the episode is a collective and more general one - a movement.

⁵⁵¹ Op.cit. Anderson (2003).

“The dynamics of worrying” refers to the process by which the burden of anxiety is handed back and forth between the two spouses during four stages of dialogue. Not only do they reveal how an underlying or supposed atmosphere of anxiety is expressed on a dialogical level, they also show the difference in perspective between husband and wife.

Knowing that *Episode no. 4*, a story about the fear of unemployment, is from 1929, it is very tempting to jump to conclusions about the Depression. However, the episode is dated several months before the Wall Street crash in New York and the ramifications did not reach Denmark until 1931. In fact, the unemployment numbers for the summer of 1929 do not differ remarkably from 1928 and 1930, so *Episode no. 4* may have been about something different. It reflects, or rather, *purports to reflect*, a more general feeling of anxiety in the late 1920s in Denmark. In the cases of the recycled material it may be something entirely different depending on the reorganisation of the narrative content.

Compared to the apparent jollity of *The Chilling Method*, *Attic Clearing* and the two holiday/birthday episodes, *Episode no. 4* is a grave one. In spite of a few jokes at the beginning and a happy ending, the realisation of how much one couple is willing to compromise their dignity to keep their only source of income is bleak. Presented with false allegations from his superior, Å defends himself with dignity, but when faced with peer pressure, financial worries, and his responsibility towards his family, he is prepared to take it all back in exchange for financial stability. The only thing that saves Å & G from the final degradation is the *deus ex machina* introduced by Locher in the shape of an apologetic letter from Å’s superior. The fact remains that the poetic solution is and was not an option in real life and by the time Å & G are saved in the episode, they have already surrendered.

Returning to the four stages of Å & G’s dialogue, the first stage (pp. 1-5), is defined by G’s friendly and inquisitive mood as she tries to figure out what is wrong with Å. He supplies her with little hints that he is not his usual self, but he cannot bring himself to load his worries onto her shoulders. The first time G notices something is wrong she says “You’re very nervous. What is wrong with you?” (p. 2), when Å mentions that they *used to* be able to afford a beer at dinnertime, she replies “What do you mean?” (p. 2)

and when Å says he has not noticed the poor quality of the food, she finally presses him for an answer: “What is it with you tonight?” (p. 4). While still struggling to get a straight answer from Å, she admits that she is having trouble with the household budget. He finally reveals that he is worried about something that happened at the office. She immediately sinks into anxiety, while Å gradually inflates his sense of self by saying “... there are things a man cannot put up with!”⁵⁵² When Å confronts her with her reaction she pulls herself together and supports him unequivocally. This is the beginning of the second stage (pp. 6-12) in which G is supportive with the exception of one anxious relapse. While she remains supportive, Å fluctuates between pride and shame and between sticking to his guns and wanting to apologise, but his process is not influenced by G’s interjections. Although he takes the time to describe the cowardice of his colleagues and his reasoning and reply to Mr Hermansen, as well as to thank G for her support, his dialogue is essentially with his own conscience: “Maybe I should have bent my back and put it all in my pocket, like I have done in the past, but I can’t, Gerda, I can’t!”⁵⁵³ The third stage begins when G slowly succumbs to her fear and loses the ability to stay supportive after her tearful description of how she worries daily about the budget and has pangs of guilt every time she sees Å’s exhausted expression (pp. 13-14). She passively accepts it when Å decides to apologise moments before being interrupted (and saved) by the doorbell. The fourth and final stage is an intensification of their mutual anxiety as they await the news from the letter. Together they prepare themselves for the dark times ahead, but as soon as the apology from Mr Hermansen has been read, they both let all pretences fall and admit just how much it would have broken them:

Å: That walk tomorrow to his door to make him an apology would have tortured me for the rest of my life!

G: Me too!⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² Op.cit. *Episode no. 4*, p. 8. Original versions: “Du er meget nervøs. Hvad er der i Vejen med dig?” (p. 2) / “Hvad mener du med det?” (p. 2) / “Hvad er der med dig i Aften?” (p. 4.) / “..der er Ting, som en Mand ikke kan finde sig i..” (p. 8).

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p. 6. Original version: “Jeg burde maaske have krummet Ryggen og stukket det i Lommen, som jeg har gjort før, men jeg kan ikke, Gerda, jeg kan ikke!”

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 16. Original version: “Den Gang i Morgen til hans Dør, for at gøre ham en Undskyldning, vilde have pint mig hele mit Liv! / Ogsaa mig!”

During the dialogue, it becomes clear that they have each their rhythms, because G only responds to what Å says and does and Å only responds to his own reasoning:

Å: One time, I almost told him that I understood why it was important for him to yell so loudly if he wanted to convince the others that he was right, since all of them were very aware that he was wrong, but I didn't...-

G: You should have!

Å: No, Gerda, I shouldn't, for he is my superior, and therefore he is always entitled to being addressed in a proper manner...⁵⁵⁵

This division presents G as the emotional one and Å as the experienced one who is aware of the conventions limiting the options for people belonging to their social class - the petty bourgeoisie. It is a clear reflection of their different worlds, when Å takes all of society into account and G must rely on Å's testimony alone since he is her window to the world. While it may portray G as a naive child, it also allows her to keep her revolutionary spirit intact, since she is not restrained by social conventions to the same extent as Å. He is the one worrying about what his in-laws and other people will say if he loses this job (p. 13) and she dismisses it: "Who cares what they say!"⁵⁵⁶

Conclusion

Although "in these times" may or may not refer to a specific situation in the job market in this case, the important point is not what it refers to but the fact that it refers to it in this manner; that it presupposes a collective experience of a "now" defined by anxiety. This means that unlike the trends category and the holidays and seasons category, the movements are not particularly topical in their approach. Instead of providing the central theme, the movement supplies the basic atmosphere of the episode. More importantly, the movement category provides a way of describing the more undefinable aspects of the "Zeitgeist", which are not covered by the other re-proportioning

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 9. Original version: "Jeg var en Gang lige ved at svare ham, at jeg forstod godt, at det var nødvendigt for ham at raabe saa højt, hvis han vilde overbevise de tilstedeværende om, at han havde Ret, da enhver af dem var ganske klar over, at han havde Uret, men det sagde jeg ikke.- / Det skulde du have gjort! / Nej. Gerda, det skulde jeg ikke, for han er min Overordnede, og har derfor altid Krav paa at blive tiltalt i en passende Form..."

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 13. Original version: "Det er da ligemeget, hvad De siger!"

categories. By approaching THF from a movements angle, we can uncover the undercurrents in the manuscripts that are only hinted at on the textual level, and which indicate how THF included and re-proportioned the more fundamental living conditions of its time, however unconsciously it might have been on Locher's part.

6.2.6. Nudges

When confronted with cultural products from the period immediately before, during, and after WWII, it is difficult not to approach them with the “benefit” of hindsight. Maybe not always rightfully so, but this hindsight often leads to a tendency of reading everything from the period in the light of the war, which has had such a massive influence on our political, cultural, and economic landscapes for the past 70 years. Similarly, THF offers an ideal surface for the projection of these ideas, especially due to its comedic and unspecific nature, which allows for multiple interpretations as I have already shown on different occasions. This degree of ambiguity is also the reason that episodes containing indirect war references, or “nudges”, could easily be re-aired later without appearing dated. In fact, there was a real tradition of nudges aimed at Danish authorities during the war and it is very likely that THF also contained such elements. Moreover, the nudges category does not cover comments in connection to WWII alone, it also extends to political or other commentary that is not contained within the categories of trends or movements. These other examples are often more difficult to detect many decades later, when the public person or political decision targeted by the comment no longer exists. To mention one, in the episode *Attic Clearing* (which I discussed in chapter 6.2.2.), the M-i-l claims that her taxes support “people who earn a doctorate by eating tinned food in the cold up in Greenland”⁵⁵⁷, by which she might be referring to a Danish eskimologist such as Knud Rasmussen. Another example is the one I will mention in connection to the “specifics” category in the following chapter, where a reference to the King sojourning in Cannes, is made in the same episode as the Greenland comment. This too has the air of an internal or understood comment, which

⁵⁵⁷ Op.cit. *Pulterkammerrydning*, p. 11. Original version: “[...] Folk der bliver Doktor phil. af at spise Konserves i Kulde oppe i Grønland!”

would have been considerably easier to interpret in its own time. That is why, with today's preponderance of knowledge and access to sources about WWI⁵⁵⁸ as opposed to other less prominent historical events or more daily developments from the period, I have chosen to focus mainly on nudges related to the war.

The example I wish to analyse in this chapter is the episode *Natligt Besøg* (Nocturnal Visit) from February 1939⁵⁵⁹, which can be interpreted as a comment on Danish neutrality in the interwar period. Though written and broadcast several months before the German occupation of Denmark and the ensuing censorship of the Danish press, it may still be a hidden remark made in a time that was ripe with the threat of war⁵⁶⁰ and an increased attention towards maintaining good international relations. Furthermore, this kind of undercover criticism became a frequent phenomenon a year later, proving that there was a propensity for using such a strategy in Danish public life. Before continuing this speculation about *Nocturnal Visit* though, I will present the main storyline.

Summary of *Nocturnal Visit*

In the middle of the night G wakes up Å because she can hear someone moving about in the next-door apartment. She is worried that it might be burglars, since she has learned that their new neighbour is on vacation in Norway. Å wonders what she expects of him and they have a long discussion back and forth about whether or not he should interfere. In their usual manner they take turns urging and discouraging each other, arguing on the one hand that they have no obligation to take care of their neighbour's things and on the other that this new knowledge is difficult to ignore. G thinks that one should not meddle in the other one's business and believes that Å does not have the courage to do it anyway. This is the deciding point for him and he picks up his pipe in the hope that it might look like a gun in the dark of the night and he goes next door in

⁵⁵⁸ In *History and the Pre: Perspectives on the Structure of Deep Historical Arguments*, a lecture held at UCL in London, 19.01.2012, Prof. Daniel Lord Smail pointed out how "history" in our day seems to be located around WWII, demonstrated by the vast amount of literature published on the subject.

⁵⁵⁹ *Natligt Besøg* (not to be confused with *Natlig Helt*, although it is also a story of a burglar in the night) 12.02.1939. Re-aired in 1946.

⁵⁶⁰ The same atmosphere dominated the episode broadcast one week earlier: *Attic Clearing*.

his pyjamas and bare feet. There, he catches a man in the act of gathering valuables, but since Å has never met their new neighbour, the other man manages to convince Å that *he* is the new neighbour and is only packing up his things to avoid them being stolen, as there were clear signs of burglary in the apartment. They both relax and Å admits that he did not bring a gun but a pipe, and that he is not really the brave type but only came because his wife said he would not. He ends up helping the burglar packing even more valuables by lending him a suitcase and asking G to call him a cab. Only after the burglar has left and Å returns to bed, does Å realise what he has done, because G met the new neighbour when he moved in and her description does not match the man next door. Completely at a loss, Å asks her what he should do and she says to go to sleep and keep completely quiet on the matter. He agrees with her and concludes the episode by saying that she was right all along: “You said that one should never interfere with what is going on at the neighbours’ ...I for one, am certainly not!”⁵⁶¹

Minding one’s own business

What makes *Nocturnal Visit* a candidate for the nudges category is first and foremost the use of a moral, which is stated so unequivocally in the closing line, thereby casting a shadow backwards over the whole episode. This is one of several examples of how a specific point is elevated to a general level, from whence it can influence a much broader context than the one in which was conceived. As in chapter 6.2.5., this moral is not unlike the way the Hansen family tradition of using a special pitcher for serving hot chocolate on birthdays was turned into a general Danish ritual in the episode *The Twins’ Birthday*, which I discussed in chapter 6.2.3. However, in *Nocturnal Visit* it is not so much a *ritual* as it is an *attitude* which is being commented on, the attitude of looking the other way or, more positively, of minding one’s own business.

Whether this attitude is a particularly Danish character trait is not important, but it is a fact that Denmark had conducted a neutrality policy since WWI, and as the only among the Nordic countries signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany on 31 May, 1939 (a

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, p. 24. Original version: “Du sagde, at man skal ikke blande sig i, hvad der foregaar inde hos ens Nabo .. jeg skal i hvert Fald ikke!”

few months after the episode was written). In the preceding years there had been some criticism in the Swedish press urging Denmark to do her part on behalf of the Nordic countries as the only country “neighbouring” with Germany. This was rejected by Danish Prime Minister Stauning in an amicable but very adamant speech held in Sweden in March 1937.⁵⁶² He wanted to make absolutely clear that he did not want anyone to interfere with the state of the Danish defense, any more than he would comment on similar affairs in other countries:

Granted, some preparations have been made at certain locations around Denmark, which do not increase our safety, and yet it would not occur to the Danish public to interfere with the military decisions of other countries, let alone make demands out of consideration for *our own* comfort. No, I must insist that Denmark does not have any *special* duties towards other countries regarding military equipment.⁵⁶³

There are two aspects to this Stauning quote. One is the fact that he rejects foreign interference with Danish politics, and the other is his insistence on not interfering with the politics of his neighboring countries (in this case Germany in particular). The latter scenario is what I see as the possible subtext in *Nocturnal Visit* and thereby the aim of the nudges in this case. However, the episode like so many other from THF, deals with its topic with great ambiguity. If this is indeed a comment on the Danish military politics of the late 1930s, what does it say about it? On the one hand the conclusion of the episode clearly shows the complications involved with interfering and on the other hand it depicts noninterference as cowardice or lack of human decency. Furthermore, the way the Hansens handle Å's failed attempt at intercepting the burglar seems even more questionable, since they choose to remain silent about his inadvertent complicity. Finally, it also highlights the absolute necessity of acting on an informed basis, which seems to be a central argument for not interfering altogether, for when does one really have sufficient insight to act on the other person's or country's behalf? On the other

⁵⁶² 08.03.1937. This is the so-called “Lænkehundstale” (The Chained Watch Dog Speech), held at *Akademiska Föreningen* (The Academic Union) in Lund, Sweden. A transcription of the speech is available at: <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/statsminister-thorvald-staunings-s-laenkehunds-tale-8-marts-1937/>

⁵⁶³ From Stauning's 1937 speech. Original version: “Naturligvis er der foretaget Foranstaltninger visse Steder udenom Danmark, som ikke forøger vor Tryghed, men det falder dog ikke dansk Offentlighed ind at blande sig i andre Landes militærpolitiske Afgørelser og slet ikke at stille Krav af Hensyn til vor Betyggelse. Nej, jeg maa holde paa, at Danmark har ikke *særlige* Pligter over for andre Lande med Hensyn til militær Udrustning.”

hand, if Å had taken the time to ask G about their new neighbour, he would never have been susceptible to the burglar's tricks and he might have prevented it.

The parallel between the Stauning quotation and the moral of *Nocturnal Visit* is not without complications. Stauning is rejecting Sweden's interference in Danish politics, while also defending Denmark's choice not to interfere with Germany's decisions, so he is rejecting any kind of interference. G seems content with merely stating that something is happening next door, while Å replies: "But that is only the beginning of the story!"⁵⁶⁴ Again, the audience is left to their own devices.

Surviving the occupation

The most famous example of discrete Danish resistance in the form of nudges comes from the broader cultural scene in the first year of the occupation and one year after *Nocturnal Visit*. A collaboration between avantgarde playwright Abell⁵⁶⁵ and radio critic Henningsen⁵⁶⁶, *Dyveke* was a revue about the love story of a mistress to the Danish King Christian II in the early 1500s. Its most famous song sung by the popular songstress Liva Weel contained a final stanza about the freedom of thought: "We are tied by mouth and hands, but the spirit cannot be tied down, for no one is captive when thoughts are free."⁵⁶⁷ Although, according to the myth, this nudge had not been noticed by the censors, it was immediately recognisable among the Danish people under occupation and became an instant hit.

There are many further examples of this kind of nudging during the war and in the article *Pressen under besættelsen* (The press during the occupation)⁵⁶⁸ it is described as a general tendency. In a WWII context, the phenomenon may be explained by the special

⁵⁶⁴ Op.cit. *Natligt Besøg*, p. 6. Original version: "Men der begynder Historien da først!"

⁵⁶⁵ Abell was also mentioned in chapter 4.4. in connection to Locher's biography.

⁵⁶⁶ As I have mentioned in previous chapters, this is the same critic, who criticised THF so consistently in his radio reviews in the mid 1930s.

⁵⁶⁷ Original version: "Man binder os paa Mund og Haand / Men man kan ikke binde Aand / For ingen er fangen / Naar Tanken er fri."

⁵⁶⁸ Wium Olesen, Niels: *Pressecensur under besættelsen* from www.danmarkshistorien.dk, which is a university based site dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge about the history of Denmark.

terms of Denmark's occupation. In the document "Extract from output report" written in May 1942 by an observer from the BBC, the situation was summed up as follows:

Denmark is the only occupied country which is still ruled by a government as to the constitutional legality of which there can be no doubt. Further, it is to a large extent the "show piece" in the Nazi New Order and enjoys a considerable degree of real self-government and a relative freedom from the more obvious signs of misery and want. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Danes are almost solidly pro-British in sentiment and ardently desire an Allied victory, but are afraid that they might lose their present privileged position were they to translate this desire into active resistance.⁵⁶⁹

It was also concluded in an internal BBC report from Denmark that the Danes were ripe for anti-Nazi propaganda, when these signs of discrete resistance became visible. Rumour has it that the occupational forces were becoming quite irritated with being forwarded to the Zoo every time they requested the German head quarters at the Danish phone exchange. Though it may just prove to be a myth, it is still quite revealing about how Danes have depicted their resistance historically. In the press, there were also frequent references to "pest control" and other foreign scourges sweeping the country during the war. A shining example of this is seen in a 1940 article by Editor-in-Chief of *Kristeligt Dagblad* (The Christian Daily Paper) Gunnar Helweg-Larsen, who wrote about a new type of butterfly larvae attacking the Danish beech forests.⁵⁷⁰ He amusingly described the butterflies as "leading a peaceful, petty bourgeois existence" and the male larvae as having a "very boastful appearance" complete with "lemon yellow bristles ending in a fiery red tail brush and velvety black rings around its body".⁵⁷¹ These quips at the expense of National Socialist lifestyle and militarist attire may not have been particularly subtle, but it is one of the reasons a Danish reader might expect such a subtext in any cultural product from the period, and that is also why I paid special attention to a THF episode called *Lus* (Head Lice).⁵⁷² Considering the very real problems with head lice caused by the low standards in health and hygiene during the

⁵⁶⁹ "Extract from output report", May 1942BBC Written Archives Caversham, E1/648 External Services Denmark.

⁵⁷⁰ Helweg-Larsen, Gunnar: "Døgnet.: Larver" in: Bindsløv Frederiksen, L. (ed.): *Pressen under besættelsen. Hovedtræk af den danske dagspresses vilkår og virke i perioden 1940-45*, Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, Aarhus, 1960. P. 160. Reversely, German propaganda also made extensive use of vermin metaphors in reference to Jewish people, e.g. images such as the ones printed in the tabloid *Der Stürmer* (1923-45).

⁵⁷¹ Original versions: "lever en fredelig, smaaborgerlig Tilværelse" / "meget prunkende Ydre" / "citrongule Børster, der slutter med en brandrød Haledusk, og om Kroppen sidder fløjlsorte Ringe."

⁵⁷² *Lus*, 08.03.1942.

occupation⁵⁷³, the title and storyline seem perfectly innocuous. In fact, even a close reading of the manuscript did not yield any clear indications that it might be about anything other than what is stated in the title. In the beginning of the episode, G tells Å about the terrible thing that has happened at her sister Ellen's house; the children have contracted head lice. G says that Ellen is distraught, and that naturally the twins will not be coming over as long as there is danger of them contracting anything. G starts musing about how Ellen's stinginess with the soap rationing must have lowered the children's hygienic standards, while Å challenges G's self righteousness by saying that anyone could contract head lice. It even says in his paper that they are flourishing in the public schools, bringing with them a sense of shame that does not go away immediately: "There are some diseases where the repercussions are more dangerous [than the symptoms], and that is very much the case with the head lice plague."⁵⁷⁴ This particular moral could be seen as the turning point, since it once more turns a local problem into a general statement, which could easily be transferred to the situation of the Danish cooperation with the German occupational forces. The "shame" in having unwillingly contracted lice might be likened to the shame of "accepting" the occupation and living under relatively comfortable conditions compared to another occupied country such as Norway. However, it turns out that Ellen's children had contracted the head lice from the Hansen twins and their innocent curiosity about the little "animals" living in their hair distracts the storyline from the subtext. In the end, Å finally manages to make G laugh about the matter, thereby abolishing the feeling of shame. In a review in the newspaper *Vestkysten*, the moral of the story was described thus: "It is best to do what Hansen and the twins do; laugh heartily about the head lice - so many things can be endured as long as one is able to laugh away the seriousness."⁵⁷⁵ In this sense it is not impossible that the episode came across as a nudge at the occupational situation and was understood as a morally uplifting encouragement from the DBC to its listeners in the midst of war.

⁵⁷³ Op.cit. Kaarsted (2004), p. 267.

⁵⁷⁴ Op.cit. *Lus*, p. 8. Original version: "Der er nogle Sygdomme, hvor Eftervirkningerne er de farligste, og det gælder netop i høj Grad Luseplagen."

⁵⁷⁵ Review in: *Vestkysten*, 09.03.1942. Original version: "Bedst er det, naar man som Hansen og Tvillingerne kan le højt af Lusene - men hvad kan man ikke komme igennem, naar man blot kan le det tunge bort?"

Conclusion

While I would never claim that a nudge as extensive as the one in *Nocturnal Visit* is all-encompassing in the sense that each element in the parable corresponds with elements in real life, I do believe that this example as well as *Head Lice* show the possibilities of the THF-material to contain such hidden criticism or remarks. Locher had an exceptional gift for covering his objective under several layers of arguments and counterarguments, topped up with comedic twists, making them almost impossible to detect. This ability was crucial to anyone with access to the public realm, especially in the following years during the German occupation from 1940-45. As it was described in connection to Henningsen's own anti-censorship tactic in May 1940:

It was no longer the audiences in the room who were criticised for their conservatism. Now they were to be called into action against the occupational forces, and that needed to be done with great linguistic discretion.⁵⁷⁶

This "discretion" is what can be unravelled by observing the THF manuscripts from a nudges perspective, at once revealing the possible historical subtext and the way in which THF could re-proportion the experience of living under the German occupation for its contemporary audiences.

6.2.7. Specifics

In the description of the different re-proportioning categories, I mentioned that the seventh and last one, specifics, is a very local phenomenon textually speaking. It is often limited to one sentence, which, though related to the main narrative, is still exchangeable for another similar sentence without it throwing the story off its course. For that reason I will not be conducting a full episode analysis in the present sub-chapter, but instead be presenting examples of different kinds of specifics and their relation to the larger narratives. These examples have been divided into the two

⁵⁷⁶ Hvidt, Erik: "Lagkage eller idé? PH's revyarbejde 1928-54" in: Hertel, Hans (ed.): *Poul Henningsen dengang og nu. Lysmageren i nyt lys*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2012. Pp. 119-135. Quotation from p. 127. Original version: "Nu var det ikke længere publikum i salen, der skulle revses for dets konservatisme. Der skulle kaldes til samling mod besættelsesmagten, og det skulle gøres med stor sproglig omtanke."

different uses for the specifics, which I have observed so far. The overall objective for using specifics is the same as with the other re-proportioning categories; to make the narrative relevant to the audience. However, what is understood by relevance, or on which level the narrative has to be relevant differs from one category to the next. As the name states, specifics can create the impression of relevance by attaching the story to a specific location in time or in space. In other words, it usually serves its purpose by containing *topical* and/or *geographical* references. Also, having the characters use these references is a depiction of the way everyday speech operates, where casual references to topical and geographical specificities are made constantly without it necessarily having any bearing on the conversation as a whole.

The *topical* reference serves to anchor the very universal character types in reality, and not just any reality but the one shared with the listeners and thereby make the characters slightly more believable as human beings and especially as Danes. In this sense the numerous references to traditional Danish foods that Å & G have every day allegedly along with the rest of Denmark are a kind of socio-cultural specifics. The food-specifics are closely related to the “holidays” category in the way it depicts Danes as lovers of pork through Å’s eternal food ramblings and as we saw in the holidays analysis there are very specific rituals connected to the consumption of food on special occasions. Returning to the topical reference, it not only “compensates” for the rather universal characters, it also serves to reinvigorate an old manuscript by replacing a formerly topical reference with a new one. So the first time a topical reference is used, it is there to anchor a universal storyline and make it believable, and the second time it serves to refresh an outdated manuscript. An example, which was mentioned earlier, is from the 1934 episode *Lussingen* (The Slap).⁵⁷⁷ The episode is about corporal punishment. G is frustrated because she cannot make their son drink from his bottle, and she asks for Å’s help which results in a discussion of child rearing. She believes in gentle persuasion, while Å is in favor of speeding things along by giving the boy a quick slap in the behind. The opposition between what G calls her “peace-loving” approach

⁵⁷⁷ Op.cit. *Lussingen* (1934) (date from SRL, the DBC states 15.01.1934). According to handwriting on the cover of the manuscript, it was re-aired in 1946.

and his “militarist” attitude is underlined in the beginning of the episode, where Å is reading about international politics and the threat of war:

G: Åge, you must come and help me..!

Å: But I’m sitting so comfortably with my newspaper...

G: This is more important.

Å: Well, it can hardly be more important than the question of whether Russia and Japan will be at war.⁵⁷⁸

While the particular conflict between Russia and Japan⁵⁷⁹ is never mentioned again, the parallel between war/militarism and domestic corporal punishment remains central to the narrative throughout. This example shows that specifics can be valuable to the larger narrative, but also that its specific *content*, the two countries at war, is only there as a topical reference. In the typed manuscript the last line in the above quotation has been changed by hand, probably an alteration from when the episode was rerun in 1946. The new version reads “Well, it can hardly be more important than the relationship between Russia, England and America?”⁵⁸⁰, this time more likely as a reference to pre-Cold War tensions.⁵⁸¹

Another similar example is from the episode *Cyklen sælges* (Selling the Bicycle)⁵⁸² from 1934. Å wants to sell his dilapidated bicycle to his colleague, but G thinks he should not sell it since he needs the exercise. Å replies that it is becoming dangerous riding a bike in the city. At this place in the typed manuscript there is a short handwritten addition (probably from the 1945-version) saying “now that the cars are returning”⁵⁸³, something which might refer to the recent rationing of gasoline and banning of privately owned vehicles during WWII in Denmark. This time the addition serves mainly to reinvigorate an old episode for new purposes. In another previously mentioned episode (*Attic Clearing*), the M-i-l complains about the government’s

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 3 (opening lines). Original version (1934): “Aage du maa hjælpe mig..!/ Nu sidder jeg lige saa godt med Avisen../ Dette her er vigtigere. / Det kan vel ikke være stort vigtigere end Spørgsmaalet om, hvorvidt Rusland og Japan kommer i Krig med hinanden.”

⁵⁷⁹ The conflict referred to here was probably the Russian-Japanese dispute over Manchuria.

⁵⁸⁰ Original version (1946): “Det kan vel ikke være stort vigtigere end Forholdet mellem Rusland, England og Amerika?”

⁵⁸¹ There is also the possibility that the alterations were simply made during the rehearsals for the first broadcast in 1934, but that does not account for the need to change the countries in question.

⁵⁸² *Cyklen sælges*. 01.09.1934 (date on the cover, BD and WP: 02.09.1934), re-aired 11.11.1945.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. p. 3. Original version: “nu bilerne kommer igen.”

intrusion on her privacy and wants to notify King Christian X, to which Å replies: “He is in Cannes!”⁵⁸⁴ Mainly there to point out the absurdity in her request, it is not that important whether the King was actually in Cannes at the time of the broadcast. However, since the King and Queen married in Cannes in 1898 and the King was since appointed honorary citizen of the city, this type of remark on his whereabouts seems very much of its time. As such, the reference may even be an example of the nudges category, which not only covers the inside references to the German occupational forces that I chose to focus on in the previous chapter, but also the ability of other inside jokes about heads of state to create a sense of community. Further versions of topical specifics include a short dialogue about filling in the new government tax form in an episode about going to the races⁵⁸⁵ from 1939 and a mention of the public initiative “Spildindsamlingen” (The Waste/Leftover Collection) in an episode about an old hat from 1944.⁵⁸⁶ These last two examples bear a close resemblance to the commissions category, since they could also serve to create public awareness about the then new tax form and the collection of waste for recycling. However since neither of the episodes spend much time informing the listeners about these initiatives the resulting function is closer to the specifics category.

Similar to the topical reference, the *geographical* one anchors the Hansens firmly to a real location and more specifically; to Copenhagen. Even if the greater part of the THF listeners had probably never been to Copenhagen or would only go there very rarely, many of its localities were included in the dialogue, apparently without alienating the listeners. On the one hand this connected THF to the shared home of Denmark and on the other hand it painted a distant and metropolitan picture of it where restaurants, movie theatres, and shops were all around the corner. While maintaining the framework of possible national unity, it also offered glimpses of an exotic city life, which could account for some of the appeal of THF.⁵⁸⁷ One example is from the episode analysed in chapter 6.2.5. *Episode no. 4*, where G mentions that she has bought the liver

⁵⁸⁴ Op.cit. *Pulterkammerrydning* (1939), p. 11. Original version: “Han er i Cannes!”

⁵⁸⁵ *Nummer fire* (Number four). 10.12.1939.

⁵⁸⁶ *Den gamle Hat* (The old hat). 21.05.1944.

⁵⁸⁷ An interesting parallel is seen in Woody Allen’s film *Radio Days* (1987). There, a 1940s working class housewife swoons over “Breakfast with Irene and Roger”, a radio show about a wealthy New York couple and their glamorous lives.

paté “from that large shop in the basement on Vesterbrogade, where you think it’s really good.”⁵⁸⁸ This metropolitan ambiance is further emphasised in stage directions mentioning the traffic noises whenever the Hansens leave their apartment, or the music on a rare evening spent at a restaurant with a modern jazz band.⁵⁸⁹ The final example actually combines the topical and the geographical references, when Å mentions the Six-Day Bicycle Races at Forum (an arena in Copenhagen, erected in 1926) in two different episodes from 1934,⁵⁹⁰ which was the year when the popular races first started.

Conclusion

As the above examples show, specifics have been used in many different contexts, often thrown into the conversation unnoticeably to help pin the formulaic characters to a specific time and place. Interestingly, this category is not that well represented among the manuscripts found in the printed THF-volumes I have read from 1931 and 1944. Here, the use of specifics is often restricted to the geographical kind. The absence of topical references in print shows their close connection to the immediacy of (live) broadcasting. Once printed, any topical specifics would soon have had the opposite effect, making the stories seem outdated in a matter of days. This must have been a deliberate practice, where the basic story was kept less specific (trends and commissions representing the highest degree of topicality in a story) and then a few strategically arranged specifics to create the illusion of relevance. Finally, this shows how Locher perfected a type of writing that met the demands of a weekly production schedule, which by all accounts, was impressively consistent for many years in a row.

⁵⁸⁸ Original version, p. 3: “[...] fra den store Forretning i Kælderen paa Vesterbrogade, der hvor du siger den er saa god...”

⁵⁸⁹ *Untitled episode*, 17.09.1929, possibly re-aired in 1930.

⁵⁹⁰ *Untitled episode*, 27.02.1934 and *Automobiludstilling* (Automobile show). 11.04.1934.

7. Concluding discussion

[...] much of radio drama offers an opportunity to spy on one's neighbours, near and far, to indulge in one of the enduring pleasures of human beings but to do so without any of the attendant risks [...]. It offers a related pleasure too: it holds up a mirror to one's own existence - one which may reveal things the owner of the mirror image did not know about himself before, but not necessarily with greater penetration than that achieved by seeing a photo or a cine picture of oneself. It is, after all, extraordinarily beguiling merely to hear oneself "played back", and this is certainly part of the want, the fascination, particularly as regards the daily serials - the encounter with lives and problems so very like one's own.⁵⁹¹

With this quote David Wade (1981) manages to sum up the main features of THF while actually writing about radio drama in general. The images of "spying on one's neighbours" and hearing "oneself 'played back'" (in short listening to a production that "holds up a mirror to one's own existence") will be very familiar at this point in the thesis. This begs the question of what makes THF particularly interesting and worthy of a thorough investigation such as the one carried out in the previous chapters? Also, what have been my experiences when working with THF and the re-proportioning concept? These are a few of the issues I would like to address in the course of the following pages.

The relevance of *The Hansen Family*

The way the series was conceived with a stable universe, changing topical themes, and an episodic structure based on the everyday lives of an "average" family is not a novel idea. This should be clear from the introduction to family serials in chapter 4.5. as well as from the frequent comparisons I have made to the Swedish equivalent *Ingenjör Björck med familj* throughout. However, as will also be clear by now, THF was introduced at a very early point in radio history and the commercial nature of its format and uses makes it an intriguing case in a public service context. It is interesting to note that Locher allowed his series to advertise for household products in the 1930s, while nowadays the DBC is extremely cautious not to make use of product placement or to highlight one commercial brand over the other in their programmes. This alone tells us something about the difference in the media landscape at that time, compared with now where the

⁵⁹¹ Op.cit. Wade (1981), p. 103.

absence of commercial content is a crucial source of differentiation for the DBC. Today, the independence from commercial interests remains one of the central arguments for the continued legitimacy of public service broadcasting as such and Denmark is no exception. Another observation in this example is the idea of “authorship”, which seems to lie behind THF’s commercial entanglements: the fact that it appeared in comic strips, print and film commercials, books and so on as mentioned in chapter 3.1. seems to be the result of Locher’s connections in the press rather than any involvement on the DBC’s part. Furthermore, as was pointed out in the reception analysis in chapter 5.4., the critics and listeners saw THF mainly as the product of Locher’s craft, and only when the content failed to live up to certain moral and ethical standards did they contribute the series to the DBC, or rather view it as a representation of the DBC’s values. These are a few of the features that make THF stand out in Danish media history, together with the fact that it indirectly documented the transition from an ever-increasing modernisation on many levels of society in the interwar period, to its “culmination” in the welfare state of the postwar years. This very transition and its more specific manifestations in the lives of the “average” citizen are what can be identified with the re-proportioning categories, which I will discuss further below.

Thoughts on my general approach

Just like THF’s contemporary audiences, I have also approached the series as the product of Locher’s creative mind, as well as a reflection of the DBC and its attitude towards broadcasting. The same combination was seen in the main themes of the literature review. Theoretical specificities aside, chapter 2 essentially presented three different approaches which indirectly defined THF as a particular kind of research object. These approaches are not necessarily restricted to one chapter or category although, as I will demonstrate below, they are more pronounced in some contexts than others.

The literature covered in chapter 2.1. generally approached radio (drama) as an *aesthetic object* with the kind of complexity that might call for a close reading of its nature and purpose. This approach proved useful in the comparative analysis of sound vs. manuscript (chapter 5.2.), just to mention one central example. The analysis was as much an exploration of the particular interpretations heard in the recordings, as it was a

discussion of the more fundamental (aesthetic) conditions for expression in sound and writing. Thus I arrived at the conclusion that the “technical” dimension of THF improved over the years in terms of a more “natural” spatial rendition and ditto delivery of the lines, while Locher incorporated increasingly detailed descriptions of the soundscape in his stage directions. Furthermore, this conclusion was only possible because I had access to both versions of the episodes in question. Some elements were exclusive to either the sound or text version, such as the jolly sound Ellen Røvsing added to G’s character, when she was answering the door in *Idleness*. This detail did not come from the stage notes, and yet it made a significant difference to the naturalism and dynamic of the scene.

Returning to the second part of the literature review, chapter 2.2., it focused on the historical connections between the nature and commercial/other purposes of the serial format, thereby pointing towards THF as a *popular cultural object*. This approach was helpful in trying to understand the seeming incongruence between the massive success of THF in its time and the cultural and archival oblivion that followed. In chapters 4.4., 5.4., and 5.5., which mainly focused on Locher’s productions and the public’s response to it, it became clear that THF was seen as a cultural artifact at best - as the work of a clever craftsman who had a talent for light entertainment with a topical nerve. Hence, THF was categorised along with other fleeting, news-related and popular products, which never quite reached the status of a classic. Consequently THF was generally not considered worthy of closer examination, as the media historical review in chapter 5.5. showed and the same sentiment partly explains, why so few recordings have survived of THF.

Finally, chapter 2.3. explored one of the other purposes of the serial format more exclusively, namely the strategy of using products from popular culture to reflect certain ideas of national identity, which suggests THF as an *ideological object*. This approach offered a way of connecting the national obligations of public service broadcasting to the reflections of national identity seen in THF, partly contained in the direct re-proportioning category (6.2.1.) and particularly in the holidays and seasons category (chapter 6.2.3.). These analyses showed how the nation-as-family and the single household were linked together through metaphorical similarities and shared holiday rituals. The most startling revelation is the seamless way in which the manuscript moves from one level to the other, including how the style changes from a merely descriptive level to a normative expression of, to put it in simplified terms, “*the Danish way of life*”.

Re-proportioning as an analytical concept: advantages and disadvantages

Having already broached the subject of the re-proportioning categories, I would also like to add a few observations from working with it as an analytical concept. In chapter 6, I introduced Ellis, whose concept of working through inspired me to consider THF as a filtering mechanism for the worries and preoccupations of its time. Creating the concept of re-proportioning for THF allowed me to explain how the series could so openly reflect the changing times to its listeners, while the Hansen universe managed to resist any such changes (at least not in the course of the series). I do not mean to imply that this is unique to the THF case – indeed it is a regular feature of sitcoms. Yet it is the *how*, the narrative intricacies, which interested me in this case. As should be clear by now, I believe that this very ability to reflect and resist is the reason for THF's success in the same vein as Dahlerup (quoted in chapter 5.5.), who remarked that the single episode was “often a mere trifle - even annoyingly thin at times - but the whole, the chain, turned into an identification with the quarrels and minor worries of this family.”⁵⁹² Re-proportioning is the concept that ties the level of the complete series together with that of the single episodes, which is the reason it was introduced on the threshold between chapters 5 and 6.

Initially, operating on the meso-level between episode and series proved a hermeneutical challenge. Naturally there was a danger of over-simplification when trying to form coherent re-proportioning categories. This means that examples not fitting the description were left out of the analyses, something which might challenge the categories on closer inspection. As is clear from chapter 6, some of them are also accompanied by a greater number of examples than others. Hence I only mention one example of “direct re-proportioning”, while there are numerous examples of the “trends” category. Yet it has been my way of grasping what I consider to be the central features of THF, and such a venture always involves simplifications to some extent. Finally, in order to focus intently on the narrative transformation of topical material in the manuscripts, I have been forced to leave out one other focal point, which might have yielded interesting results. The point in question stems from the observation that food is a central theme

⁵⁹² Op.cit. Dahlerup (1968), p. 131.

throughout the series, touching on many of the same elements, which I have chosen to highlight in this thesis. The scarcity of food and Å's ensuing daydreams of steaks reflect the historical living conditions, the Hansens' social class, as well as Å's childish dispositions. The theme of food also includes G's constant battles with the household economy, and the way in which the most insignificant slice of cake enters a kind of secondary economy, as a way of "bribing" a relative from whom Å stands to inherit. In short, examining how this theme is used to make social, financial, and gender-related distinctions in the Hansen universe would make an ideal starting point for future research. However, since it is such a potentially all-encompassing approach, I have had to leave it out of the present thesis.

As concerns the more positive outcomes of working with the concept of re-proportioning, it has been useful in trying to answer my initial research question of how the DBC managed its public service responsibilities 1925-50. Or to be more precise, as I declared in chapter 1, it *is* the answer to that overall question. In this thesis, re-proportioning has been presented as a THF-specific expression of how the DBC followed a strategy of relevance, i.e. aimed at appearing relevant to its listeners in the early years of broadcasting. Secondly, re-proportioning allows us to explain the immense success of THF; the fact that it managed to survive two of the most challenging decades of the 20th century as a family *and* as a programme suggests that it might have been, however fleetingly, a beacon of hope and stability to its listeners. Therefore the re-proportioning categories are crucial, since they reveal how the impression of topicality and relevance was maintained on several levels simultaneously. Thirdly, it shows the THF material as an important historical source, albeit a fictional one, which may serve as an indication of a particular "Zeitgeist". From this follows that I have been interested in THF as Locher's narrative construct, which may not have been an entirely realistic rendition of historical events, but which nevertheless provides alternative insights into what it might have been like to experience this historical period, the wonders and anxieties of the age as felt by the common man. Finally, as was also indicated in the introductory chapter, the concept adds to our understanding of the DBC 1925-50 and the extent to which it accommodated its listeners (as well as its own perception of their wishes), while at the same time redeeming THF somewhat from its status as forgettable entertainment.

Areas for future research and final remarks

Though I have already sketched one possible direction for future research, there are two other areas which merit further exploration. As previously mentioned, the nature of the THF material has carved out the direction for the literature review as well as determined the analytical terminology. In order to follow this conscious route “from the programme and outwards” I have spent much of the archival research acquainting myself with the THF material. While I do not regret this, I am aware that distributing my time more evenly between THF and the more or less known collections at Rigsarkivet could have shed light on some of the matters I have had to make qualified assumptions about here. This includes the production of THF (people, procedures, technical details) and possible notes concerning the series as seen from a managerial level. As already stated, taking the time to catalogue this material once and for all would be invaluable to future media historical research in Denmark, and could force us to reexamine some of the literature already written on the matter.

The other area, which could benefit from further exploration, is the media historical aftermath of THF, and its successor *Karlsens Kvarter* in particular. Not only would it be interesting to compare the two series, but *Karlsens Kvarter* might also be a useful litmus test for the more general applicability of the re-proportioning categories. Again, this is something I would have liked to pursue. Yet, doing so would have entailed the inclusion of a whole new historical context, which would have infringed on the amount of detailing possible in the THF analysis.

Looking back at chapter 6.2. it is now possible to see the seven analyses as metaphorical “tests” of THF, which lead us to understand in a more fundamental way how the DBC could express a sense of relevance to its listeners. By revealing how the Hansen construct resisted the ramifications of the different re-proportioning categories, the analyses show how THF represented the reassurance that family values would prevail even in the face of drastic societal change. At the same time, by reflecting mainly values and experiences, which were (presumably) already known to the listeners, it reaffirmed them in their existing beliefs rather than challenging them in any fundamental way. This is the gentle balance maintained by Locher, and, by extension, a small portion of the DBC in its monopoly years.

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<http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=67dfa9e9-a1c8-4fbb-a362-41ce93b4b5d5>

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Broadcast on DBC P3. Date unknown but probably between March and May 1970. Link to the LARM archive:

<http://larm.fm/#MCM/Object?guid=543ce0e3-6536-4898-ae5-008c8f6aac7b>

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